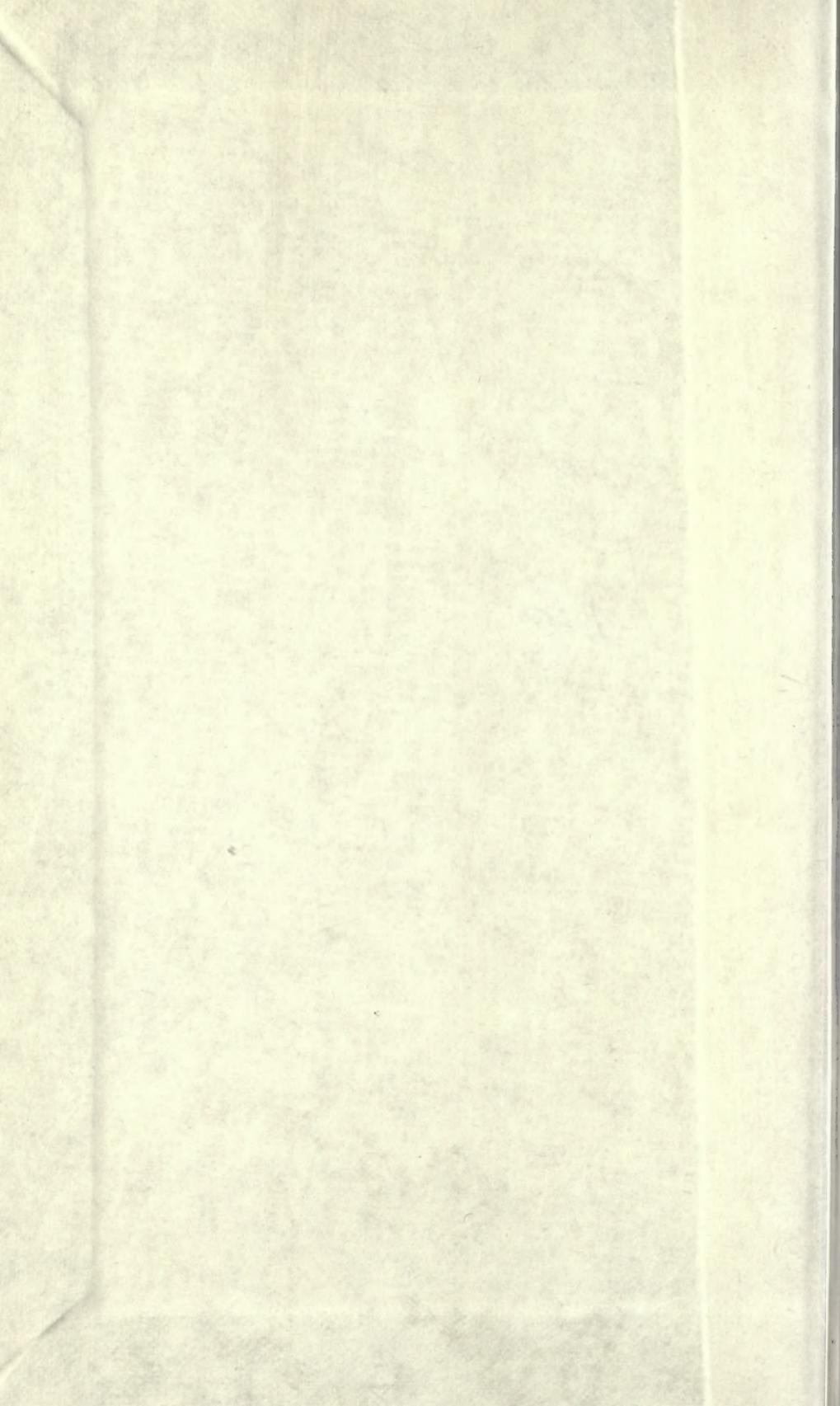


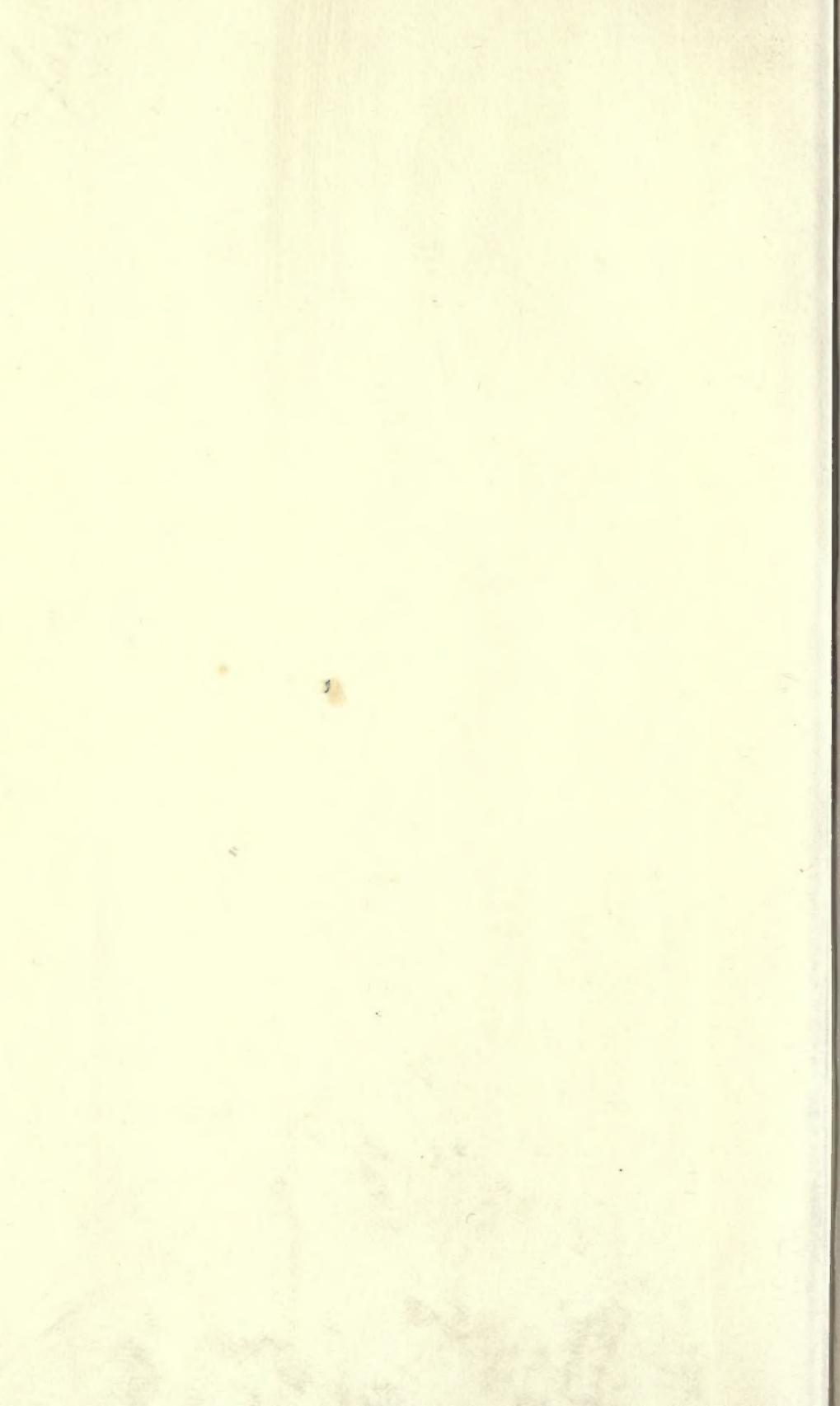


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THE
HISTORICAL
AND
HEROIC
EDITION
OF
THE
MACHIAVELLIAN
ART
OF
STATE
MANAGEMENT



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THE HEROIC STUBBS



EDWARD COOPER M.D.

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THE HEROIC STUBBS.

A COMEDY OF A MAN WITH AN IDEAL,
IN FOUR ACTS.

BY

HENRY ARTHUR JONES.

LONDON :
PRINTED AT THE CHISWICK PRESS.
1906.



PR
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CHISWICK PRESS: CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

ROLAND STUBBS, Ladies' Bootmaker, Piccadilly.

WILLIE DELLOW.

SIR ARTHUR CANDLISH, F.S.A.

SIR THOMAS STARBUCK.

HARVEY DIX, Special Correspondent of "The Englishman."

HOBDAY, Proprietor of the "Crab and Lobster."

MACKETT, a boatman.

BALLARD.

LADY HERMIONE CANDLISH.

LADY MILDRED STARBUCK.

LADY BODICOTE.

FLORA STUBBS.

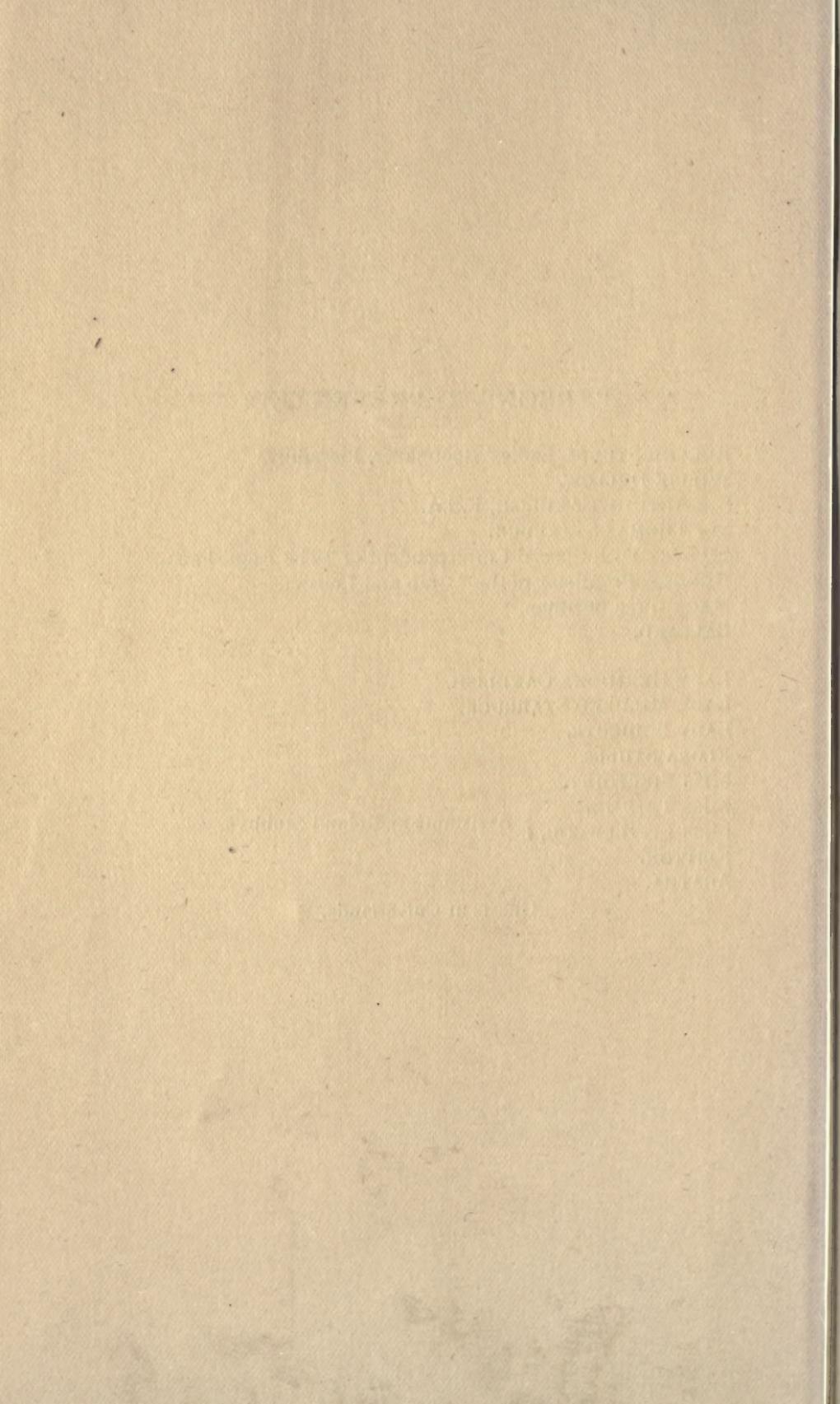
MISS PIERPOINT.

MISS TRIMMER,
MISS LITTLEWOOD, } Assistants at Roland Stubbs's.

FLITTON.

AGATHA.

Guests at Culverlands.



ACT I.

SCENE.—PRIVATE FITTING-ROOM AT ROLAND STUBBS'S,
PICCADILLY.

TIME.—AN AFTERNOON IN JULY.

ACT II.

SCENE.—THE “CRAB AND LOBSTER” AT YAVERCLIFF.

TIME.—THE EVENING OF THE SAME DAY.

ACT III.

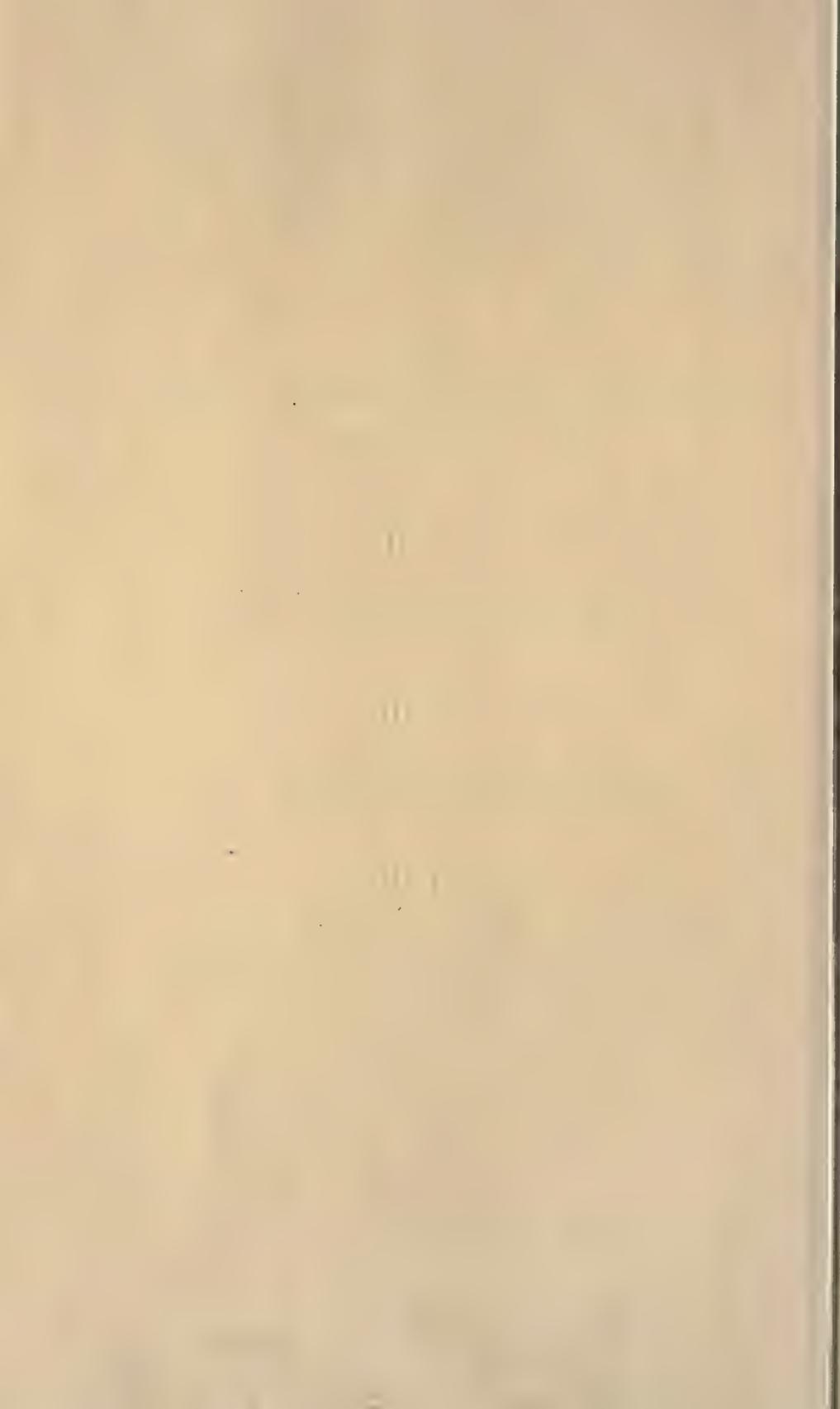
SCENE.—THE SAME.

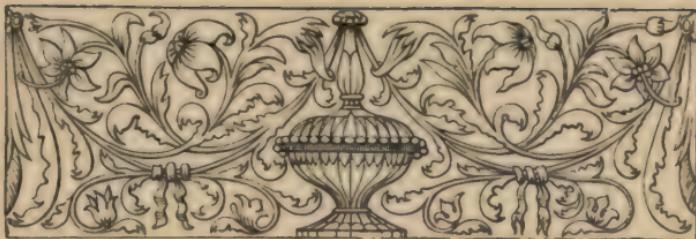
TIME.—A FEW HOURS LATER, THE SAME NIGHT.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—THE GARDEN-ROOM AT CULVERLANDS.

TIME.—THE FOLLOWING SATURDAY EVENING, AFTER
DINNER.





ACT I.

SCENE: *The private fitting-room behind the shop of ROLAND STUBBS, Bootmaker, Piccadilly. The place is fitted up with ranges of shelves, fixtures and drawers containing boots and boxes of boots. There are several chairs towards the middle of the room, with footstools placed near for trying on boots. The left wall of the room is covered with shelves and fixtures. The right wall of the room is also covered with shelves and fixtures, except in the centre, where there is a door leading into the house. The wall at back divides the fitting-room from the shop on the left side, and from the counting-house on the right. The further walls of the shop and of the counting-house are seen through a glass partition which has been let into the wall from a height of about three feet and a half. A green curtain about two feet high runs along the glass partition in such a way that only the tops of the walls of the shop and counting-house are seen, except when the respective doors leading into them are opened. The door leading into the counting-house is in the left half of the glass partition. The counting-house has office furniture, and on the further wall a placard or two and an almanack. A desk and stool are placed so that anyone seated in the counting-house looks down into the shop, which is divided from the counting-house by a similar glass partition. A door*

at back, close to the centre, leads into the shop, and shows the further wall lined with similar ranges of drawers and fixtures. A counter with drawers takes up the remaining part of the left side at back. A telephone is fixed to the corner of the counter. Implements and paraphernalia necessary to a boot shop are lying about in handy places. In front of the drawers on the left side is a framed notice. A large mounted full-length looking-glass down stage, left. A pair of steps against the fixtures, right.

TIME: *About half past two on an afternoon in July.*

Discover MISS TRIMMER, a West End shop lady, elegantly dressed in black. She is on the short steps, right, arranging some boxes in the fixtures just above her head. MISS LITTLEWOOD, another shop young lady, enters rather excitedly through the open door from shop.

Miss L. [A bright, pleasant London girl, with a slight Cockney accent.]



SAY, that Mr. Dellow is walking up and down outside. He's on the look-out.

Miss T. Yes, we shall have Mrs. Treviss here directly.

Miss L. I heard her talking to Lady Risbridge about him the other day, when I was trying on her boots. They do have some fine sprees on Mr. Dellow's yacht.

Miss T. Yes, there was an awful scandal last year. It nearly got into the papers, only they hushed it up.

Miss L. I suppose he's about as bad as they make 'em?

Miss T. Yes, and a trifle worse. That's what makes all the women so mad after him.

Miss L. Mrs. Treviss kept on calling him "Fido."

Miss T. That's his nickname amongst them; because he's faithful to so many of 'em all at the same time.

Miss L. [Looking off.] There he goes again.

Miss T. Where? [Springing to door, looking off.]

Miss L. He is a handsome devil, isn't he?

Miss T. He gives me a horrible, shivery, must-jump-over-the-precipice kind of feeling.

Miss L. I'm only a young lady in a shop, but I wouldn't go sailing with Mr. Dellow—no, not for this child!

Miss T. Oh, I don't know. I often ask myself, "What's the use of being virtuous in a shop?"

Miss L. There he is again! [Looking off.] He smiled at me.

Miss T. It was at me.

Miss L. At you?! Oh, Trimmer, if you could only see how vain you are!

Miss T. Me vain?! Well, of all the silly, conceited little monkeys—

Miss L. At any rate, my hair isn't dyed!

Miss T. But your figure! Your figure!

Miss L. Well, my figure? What's the matter with my figure? [Sees STUBBS, shows alarm.] The Governor!

MR. ROLAND STUBBS has entered, from right, into the counting-house behind them. He is about thirty, dapper, alert, well-dressed in a smart frock coat, a sharp business-like walk, with pleasant, sincere, unaffected, obliging, middle-class manners. He stands for a moment or two watching the girls. They show confusion when they see him. He comes forward from counting-house.

Stubbs. What's the matter with your figure, Miss Littlewood? I forget for the moment what your figure is, but it will be very much too high for me to pay if you waste your time rowing with Miss Trimmer instead of looking after my business. That's what's the matter with your figure. Will you please attend to it?

Miss L. Yes, sir.

Stubbs. Thank you. [To MISS TRIMMER as she goes off.] Will you please see if Beccles has brought Lady Hermione's boots from the workshop?

Miss T. Yes, sir.

[MISS TRIMMER goes off into shop. STUBBS goes to telephone and rings.

Stubbs. [At telephone.] Will you please give me two four seven four Gerrard? [A little pause.] Is that you, workshop? Has Beccles finished Lady Hermione's boots? He's bringing them round? Right.

[He rings off the telephone, goes up to looking-glass, looks at himself critically, removes a thread, adjusts his tie, is dissatisfied with it, re-adjusts it, poses again, removes a speck of dust, is not quite pleased with himself.

Re-enter MISS TRIMMER with a pair of lady's kid boots very handsomely finished.

Miss T. Lady Hermione's boots. Beccles said he hoped they'd please you this time; if they didn't, he'd give 'em up as a bad job.

[STUBBS takes cloth off boots and gives it back to TRIMMER.

Stubbs. Beccles has none of the artist's pride in his work, has he?

Miss T. No, sir.

[Exit MISS TRIMMER into shop. Left alone, STUBBS looks round, carefully closes the door leading into shop. He then takes LADY HERMIONE'S boots, and looks at them lovingly. Then he carefully and reverently kisses them. His sister, FLORA STUBBS, enters door, right, and sees him doing it. She is about twenty-four, bright, energetic, practical, full of common-sense. She is quite well dressed, and has very good manners of the tradesman class.

Flora. Lady Hermione's?

Stubbs. Yes.

Flora. For a sharp, clever man, Roland, what a fool you are!

Stubbs. [Grinning, as at a compliment.] Yes, ain't I? That's the reason I'm so successful!

Flora. What is?

Stubbs. The happy mixture of poetry and business in my composition. My inborn poetry rouses my business faculties and spurs them on to victory, while my strict business habits keep my poetry and imagination in order, and stop me from soaring off into the clouds at a tangent. I'm a business enthusiast, that's what I am! That's what has carried me to the top of the tree at thirty years of age—and will carry me higher yet.

Flora. It will never carry you any nearer Lady Hermione.

Stubbs. I know that! Well, I don't want to be any nearer to her than I am now!

Flora. Then why do you keep on loving her?

Stubbs. Because I can't help it.

Flora. But you needn't be so ridiculous over it.

Stubbs. [Indignantly.] I'm not ridiculous. Am I ridiculous? How am I ridiculous?

Flora. When she comes into the shop, you let everybody see you're in love with her.

Stubbs. [Indignant.] I don't. I hide it from everybody but you.

Flora. Dear innocent old man, everybody sees and knows it! The young ladies watch you with her, and giggle. So do her friends that come in with her. The other day she was chaffing you—

Stubbs. I'm sure she wasn't. She was as sweet and adorable as lady could be. [Faltering.] Do you think she was chaffing me?

Flora. Couldn't you see it?

Stubbs. No. I don't care if she was. Let her chaff. Let them laugh at me. I can laugh too. It was her

kindness to me in the Brompton Road years ago that started me on my career, and put me into a splendid West End position with four thousand a year.

Flora. Well, now you are in a splendid West End position, why not try to love somebody in your own station with another four thousand a year? There would be some sense in that?

Stubbs. [Shakes his head.] Yes, perhaps, but I couldn't do it. I've got so in the way of loving her—it's all part of my success—it is my success—it's my dream, and my dream is me—you don't understand—

Flora. No, I don't. You're wasting a lot of steam and business energy in loving Lady Hermione Candlish, when you might find some nice girl, and marry her—

Stubbs. And have a family, and live in a villa! And then it would be all over.

Flora. What?

Stubbs. My life. I should never invent anything more, I should never have another aspiration. I should be dead.

Flora. But it's all such an illusion—

Stubbs. Of course it's an illusion! That's why it works so well! Illusions pay! Ideals pay! It's the men and the nations that have illusions and ideals that get on! Look at Nelson! What did he tell the British nation? "If it hadn't been for my Emma, I couldn't have won Trafalgar for you," or something like that. Well, if it hadn't been for my Hermione, I couldn't have patented my soft kid. I shouldn't be here! You wouldn't be here! You'd be a poor, whitefaced girl behind the counter, and I should be a shopman with a dirty apron and fifty pounds a year! That's what my Emma has done for me! So let them laugh! I'm not such a fool after all.

Flora. No, old man, perhaps not. Well, keep on being a fool, but [*kissing him*]—don't be quite so proud of it, and don't let everybody see it.

Stubbs. What does it matter? [Rather piteously.] Flora, I wasn't very ridiculous the other day, was I?

Flora. No, no.

Stubbs. I thought I was only a little extra chivalrous to her.

Flora. Well, chivalry is ridiculous, isn't it?

Stubbs. Yes. No. It can't be ridiculous to love a woman with all one's heart and soul, to worship her, and her only, to be ready to die for her—to be ready to—

Flora. [Smiling, claps her hand over his mouth.] Ta-ta, dear. I'm going for a stroll in the Park.

Stubbs. Are you? I'll treat you to a little French dinner to-night.

Flora. Will you? That will be jolly. Don't forget!

[Going off right.

Enter MISS TRIMMER, from shop.

Miss T. Lady Hermione has called about her boots.

[*STUBBS darts out into the shop.* MISS TRIMMER smiles at FLORA and goes off after him. FLORA goes to the door, and peeps off into the shop. She withdraws towards door, right, as STUBBS appears ushering in LADY HERMIONE CANDLISH from shop.

Stubbs. You know your way into my little sanctum, my lady.

[Sees FLORA watching. He makes her a sharp sign to go.

Enter, from the shop, LADY HERMIONE CANDLISH.

She is about twenty-five, pretty, radiant, careless, good-tempered, easy, natural, without great depth of feeling. FLORA stays watching.

Lady H. Sir Arthur hasn't called yet?

Stubbs. No, my lady.

Lady H. He arranged to meet me here.

Stubbs. [Goes to door and calls off into shop authoritatively.] Miss Trimmer, when Sir Arthur Candlish arrives, will you please tell him her ladyship is in here trying on? Thank you.

[*He closes the shop door. He makes FLORA another sharp sign to go. Exit FLORA right. LADY HERMIONE has been reading a framed notice which hangs on the left side. She comes away from it, and STUBBS places a chair for her to sit.*

Stubbs. Will your ladyship please to sit?

Lady H. I'm afraid I'm taking up your valuable time.

Stubbs. Not at all, my lady. [Placing the chair.

Lady H. One of your assistants would be able to attend to me.

Stubbs. I regard it as my especial privilege, my lady.

[*Again placing the chair for her. LADY HERMIONE seats herself. STUBBS kneels at LADY HERMIONE'S feet. She places her foot in position, and he very reverently unbuttons her left shoe, and takes it off during the following conversation.*

Lady H. I've been reading that notice—"Any assistant found misrepresenting goods or making false statements to customers will be dismissed." Don't you find it very difficult to act upon that rule?

Stubbs. No, my lady. I don't find it's necessary to cheat in business. I believe a man gets on better without it. You see, my lady, there are two kinds of competition in business—the competition to do things cheap, and the competition to do things well. The competition to do things well is the very soul of business. I beg your pardon, my lady.

Lady H. What is it?

Stubbs. I inadvertently twisted your ladyship's ankle, didn't I?

Lady H. No.

Stubbs. Your ladyship will kindly let me know if I hurt you?

Lady H. Oh, yes.

Stubbs. And now, might I ask your ladyship to honour me with the other foot?

Lady H. It won't be necessary to try on both boots, will it?

Stubbs. If your ladyship doesn't mind. There was just a—a slight tenderness on the other foot.

Lady H. Slight tenderness! It's shooting now—fearfully!

Stubbs. [Distressed.] My lady, if I knew of any way to alleviate your sufferings! Will you allow me, my lady? [She puts the right foot in position, and he unbuttons that shoe.] I always put my best workmen upon your boots; in fact I did a great part of the work on your last pair myself.

Lady H. Then you're a practical bootmaker?

Stubbs. Yes, my lady. Of course, most of the work is done by machinery nowadays, but I flatter myself I could, if necessary, turn out a pair of boots from start to finish with my own hands.

Lady H. You're an extraordinary man, Mr. Stubbs.

Stubbs. I am a little bit out of the common, thanks to your ladyship.

Lady H. Thanks to me?

Stubbs. And our little episode in the Brompton Road!

Lady H. Episode in the Brompton Road?

Stubbs. Your ladyship doesn't remember?

Lady H. No. What do you mean?

Stubbs. When your ladyship was quite a young lady, as Lady Hermione Endsleigh, you used to have your boots made at Spackman's in the Brompton Road.

Lady H. Yes.

Stubbs. Spackman was a thorough brute. I was his shop boy, and one day when you and your governess

came into the shop he was bullying me about neglecting my work, and he said I shouldn't have any dinner that day. Well, he half starved me as it was, and I burst into tears, and you looked at me, and took pity on me.

[*He has now unbuttoned both her shoes, and he releases her foot, rises, and takes up one of the new boots from the counter where he had left them, brings it to her.*

Lady H. I took pity on you?

Stubbs. [*Standing with the new boot in hand.*] Yes. I was such a miserable whitefaced little wretch, and you—I can see your ladyship now—you had on a pink frock and a big flapping hat—and when Spackman left the shop for a moment, you came up and shook your finger at me, and said, “Roland! I’m sure you’re a shocking bad boy! But I like shocking bad boys,” you said, “because I’m a shocking bad girl, am I not, Miss Curtice?” And you turned and made a face at your governess. Then you held out a two shilling piece, and you said, “There, Roland! Go and get some dinner, and never neglect your work again; because if you do, Roland, you’ll never have a shop of your own, Roland, and make my boots when you grow up, Roland!”

Lady H. Did I say all that?

Stubbs. Yes, your ladyship. Romantic little incident, wasn’t it?

Lady H. Very romantic. So that’s what you’ve alluded to once or twice. I couldn’t understand—

Stubbs. I’ve always cherished it up as a friendly souvenir between you and me—quite respectfully, my lady!

Lady H. Oh, yes!

Stubbs. [*Watching her closely.*] And sometimes I’ve fancied your ladyship was also cherishing it up—

Lady H. No. I’d forgotten all about it!

Stubbs. [Shows keen disappointment, kneels at her feet.] May I trouble your ladyship? [LADY HERMIONE puts up her left foot. STUBBS takes off the shoe she is wearing, puts on the new boot and buttons it up during the following conversation.] Yes, it was very romantic, and very lucky for me; it changed all the course of my life.

Lady H. Indeed! How?

Stubbs. I set to work from that day, and I put my heart and soul into the boot and shoe business. I kept on thinking of your ladyship—quite respectfully, you understand—and I worked and worked and got to be Spackman's foreman, and when he died, I plunged and took his business in the Brompton Road. Then I got the idea of making a soft durable kid by a new process. You know for a long while the Yankees beat us out and out at soft kid—

Lady H. Did they?

Stubbs. Kicked us right out of the market, I assure you. But when I patented my new soft kid, they had to take a back seat.

Lady H. They didn't like that, I suppose.

Stubbs. Not a little bit. But I did it! I did it, your ladyship, simply by thinking of your ladyship! I beat the Yankees! I knocked 'em clean into a cocked hat! And there they remain!

Lady H. I'm quite embarrassed.

Stubbs. [Vigorously buttoning up the new boot.] Why, my lady?

Lady H. It seems I've been the means of destroying a flourishing American industry.

Stubbs. Your ladyship is—if I may use a vulgar expression—your ladyship is chaffing.

Lady H. No, I'm very serious. The next time you repeat this tale—

Stubbs. Your ladyship, I couldn't—I never speak of it; it's too sacred! [Having buttoned the boot.] Does that feel pretty comfortable?

Lady H. Ye-es.

Stubbs. Would your ladyship please to stand up [LADY HERMIONE rises] and press a little on the foot?

Lady H. Isn't that toecap rather—too ornamental?

Stubbs. Oh, nothing could be too ornamental for your ladyship [*catches sight of her face*]—I mean, I made the toecap myself.

Lady H. Oh, let it stay!

Stubbs. [Pressing his hand over the new boot on her foot.] Plenty of room over the—arching instep?

Lady H. Yes, I think.

Stubbs. Just a little tight at the side here?

Lady H. Just a little.

Stubbs. I'll stretch it, my lady. [Rising.]

Lady H. Do, please. [Looking down.] I think that will do.

Stubbs. I trust, my lady, you aren't offended at my telling you how grateful I am to you?

Lady H. No, but I think you must get some other kind lady to inspire your next invention!

Stubbs. Oh, don't say that, my lady! I like to think that you—[gets embarrassed] I mean—it's such a grand thing to have an ideal in life.

Lady H. Evidently.

Stubbs. That's what I impress on all my assistants. "Have an ideal," I say to them, "and keep your ideal always in front of you!—and above all—" Well, what is it now?

[Turns sharply round on MISS TRIMMER, who has entered with a letter in her hand.]

Miss T. Mr. Dellow came in and asked for you, my lady, and we said you were engaged trying on. So he asked for a sheet of paper and an envelope, and wrote this.

[Giving letter to LADY HERMIONE.]

Lady H. Thank you.

Miss T. He said he'd be back directly.

[Exit MISS TRIMMER. LADY HERMIONE opens the letter, reads it, shows great interest and some amusement, reads it over again, and stands absorbed. STUBBS is jealously and keenly watching her, holding the other new boot in hand. At length she folds up the letter and puts it in her pocket.

Stubbs. May I trouble you for the other foot, my lady?

Lady H. [Recalling herself.] Oh, yes!

[She seats herself, and STUBBS kneels at her feet, takes off the other shoe, which he had previously unbuttoned.

Enter, from shop, SIR ARTHUR CANDLISH, about forty, tall, dignified, distinguished, nearly bald, with rather cold and reserved manners.

Sir A. [Opening door.] In here?

Miss T. [Who is just behind him.] Yes, sir.

[SIR ARTHUR enters room, and MISS TRIMMER disappears in shop. STUBBS rises.

Sir A. Ah, here you are!

Stubbs. Good afternoon, Sir Arthur.

Sir A. Good afternoon, Mr. Stubbs.

Stubbs. Won't you be seated? [Placing chair.

Sir A. [Taking out watch.] I haven't much time.

Stubbs. I took the liberty of calling at Culverlands the other day. Perhaps your butler mentioned it?

Sir A. No. What were you doing in that part of the country?

Stubbs. I've taken a little house down there for the summer holidays—the Bungalow at Chidhurst, about half a mile from you.

Sir A. [Stiffly.] Indeed!

Stubbs. And I thought you wouldn't mind my see-

ing over Culverlands and the old Abbey? I'm a little bit of an archæologist myself.

Sir A. Are you?

Stubbs. Oh, quite in a humble way. [*Kneeling again, putting on the other new boot, buttoning it up.*] I believe in having a hobby, so long as it doesn't interfere with business. Bootmaking is my business, and Gothic architecture is my hobby. You'd scarcely credit how beautifully they go together, and what a heap of innocent pleasure I derive from both pursuits.

Sir A. [Coldly.] Indeed!

Lady H. [Mischievously.] Sir Arthur is a little too classical, I'm afraid, to share your innocent delight in Gothic, Mr. Stubbs.

Sir A. My dear Hermione!

Lady H. My dear Arthur, you are a little classical, you know.

Stubbs. That seems to be a great discovery reported this morning, Sir Arthur—this magnificent Roman bath at Uriconium?

Sir A. Yes. [*Again taking out watch.*] I want to get away there this afternoon. Shall you be long now?

Stubbs. A few minutes, Sir Arthur. How does that seem to fit, my lady?

Lady H. Very nicely, I think.

MISS TRIMMER appears at door leading to shop.

Miss T. Lady Missenden wishes to see you about her account, sir. She's in a hurry——

Stubbs. Will you excuse me a moment, my lady?

Lady H. Certainly.

[MISS TRIMMER goes into shop. STUBBS follows her.

Sir A. He's a well-meaning little fellow. I wish he wouldn't show his evident admiration for you.

Lady H. My dear Arthur, you surely don't mind that? He's always quite respectful.

Sir A. Oh, it's too ridiculous to speak about. But I should have thought you would have found him very annoying.

Lady H. Oh, no. I find the little man very amusing.

Sir A. [Again taking out watch.] Will you be long?

Lady H. Would you mind if I don't go to Euston with you?

Sir A. You promised to see me off.

Lady H. If I had time. When does your train start?

Sir A. I must catch the three-fifteen. The workmen have already uncovered two columns, and there's nobody to look after them.

Lady H. Oh, then you must go at once.

Sir A. Yes. [Comes up to her seriously, puts his hand affectionately on her shoulder.] Hermione!

Lady H. Yes.

Sir A. I saw Dellow outside. He seemed to be waiting about.

Lady H. After me?

Sir A. He has paid you a great deal of attention lately.

Lady H. [Teasing.] Hm—not too much.

Sir A. I think I must be the judge of that.

Lady H. My dear Arthur, when you wouldn't give me the new motor car, you said I might think of something in its place.

Sir A. What have you thought of?

Lady H. I've thought of a pleasant, harmless, little flirtation with Willie Dellow. [She is watching him. He grows angry, and she continues in a slow, provoking vein.] It won't be as exciting as a motor car, and it won't be nearly as dangerous; but it will be much less expensive to you.

Sir A. [Very stiffly.] I've asked you many times not to jest about marriage, and such subjects.

Lady H. I know you have. But you do take them so very seriously, I'm obliged to skip lightly round

them, so as to restore a steady, respectable average for the pair of us.

Sir A. At least I hope you've given up your idea of going on Dellow's yacht?

Lady H. No, I haven't. Why shouldn't I go?

Sir A. After that scandal with Lady Thornbury last year!

Lady H. Oh, that's forgotten. And if I go, Harriet Treviss and the Selincourts will be there.

Sir A. I beg you won't go.

Lady H. I won't promise.

Sir A. Then I must insist that you don't go.

Lady H. Then it's very horrid of you. Here are you enjoying yourself, going down to Uriconium to revel in a Roman bath, the most luxurious Roman bath that has ever been discovered in Great Britain; and when your poor neglected wife wants to take a little sea voyage, you forbid her.

Sir A. [Gentle, quiet, firm.] Yes, I forbid you. You won't go?

Lady H. Haven't you just forbidden me?

Sir A. Yes, but—

Lady H. You don't think I should disobey you?

Sir A. You might go without my knowing.

Lady H. [Looks up at him, smiles.] Might I?

Sir A. Hermione, you'd never—deceive me?

Lady H. Never. Except for your own good.

Sir A. Deceive me for my own good!

Lady H. If I had to choose between disobeying you openly, and deceiving you—

Sir A. I'd rather you disobey me openly.

Lady H. [Looks at him; shakes her head.] As a loving wife, I think I should deceive you. Because if I disobeyed you openly, that would only make you very unhappy, and very disagreeable; whereas if I deceived you, you'd know nothing about it, and we should go on loving each other as before.

Sir A. [Suddenly.] Hermione, you aren't going on Dellow's yacht?

Lady H. Didn't I tell you I was going to Milly's?

Sir A. Then you are going to Milly's.

Lady H. Of course I'm going to Milly's.

Sir A. Hermione, come to Wroxeter with me.

Lady H. I couldn't. I've never taken a Roman bath. [Shivers.] It would be too classical, too bracing! You try it first!

Sir A. I won't go to Wroxeter. We'll get back to Culverlands to-night.

Lady H. I can't. I must go to Milly's now. I've got all my luggage at Waterloo. And Flitton is to meet me there at a quarter past four.

[SIR ARTHUR takes a step or two in indecision.

Sir A. Very well. [Comes to HERMIONE very affectionately.] Hermione, you know I trust you.

Lady H. I've never given you any reason not to

Sir A. And you never will—for Arthur's sake?

Lady H. For Arthur's sake, you may trust me, Arthur.

Sir A. I do. You won't forget that? I've only just time. Good-bye. [Kissing her.

Lady H. Good-bye. Write to Milly's.

Re-enter STUBBS from shop.

Stubbs. I beg pardon for keeping you waiting, my lady. Shall I take the new boots off?

Lady H. Yes, please.

[Seats herself. STUBBS kneels, and begins to unbutton the new boots. LADY HERMIONE has taken out her handkerchief and dropped it. STUBBS keeps a watchful eye on it.

Sir A. How long will you stay at Milly's?

Lady H. How long will you be at Wroxeter?

Sir A. Two or three days.

Lady H. To-day's Monday. You won't forget all those people are coming to Culverlands for the week end?

Sir A. No. I'll be back for them. I'm thinking—yes—I'll come to Milly's on Thursday, and bring you home Friday.

Lady H. That will be very nice of you.

Sir A. Give my love to Milly and Tom. Write me a line when you get down to-night.

Lady H. Oh, I shan't have time. I shall only just get there for dinner.

Sir A. [Disappointed.] Oh, very well. Good-bye.

[Exit SIR ARTHUR into shop. STUBBS has unbuttoned one of the new boots. He takes it off, puts on one of the old shoes, and begins to button it up.

Lady H. So you've taken the Bungalow at Chidhurst?

Stubbs. Yes, my lady. I hope you don't think I'm intruding?

Lady H. How?

Stubbs. In coming so near your ladyship and Culverlands.

Lady H. Oh, no. I daresay you're fond of the country.

Stubbs. Yes, I do a little rabbiting and golfing at times. But, after all, there's no place like London.

Lady H. Isn't there?

Stubbs. No. It's so full of poetry and romance, London is.

[He has watched his chance and steals her handkerchief.

Lady H. You think so?

Stubbs. [Slipping her handkerchief into his pocket.] Chuckfull of poetry. For those who have eyes to see it, and a heart to feel it.

Lady H. And you have a heart for poetry, Mr. Stubbs? Now, who is your favourite poet?

Stubbs. Byron. I'm very fond of Longfellow and Tennyson, but for sheer outpouring of passion, in my humble opinion, Byron beats the lot of 'em. May I beg the other foot, my lady?

[He has buttoned up one shoe. She gives him the other foot. He takes off the new boot, and is about to put on the old shoe, when WILLIE DELLOW lounges up to the door from shop. DELLOW is about thirty, dark, well-built, strikingly handsome, with a soft, caressing voice, and a lazy, careless manner. A man without principles and without intellect, but with strong passions; otherwise quite commonplace and shallow, so accustomed to adoration from women that he would consider himself defrauded if he did not easily win it from any woman he desired. The moment STUBBS sees him, he jumps up with evident antagonism, leaving LADY HERMIONE with one shoe off.

Dellow. How d'ye do, Lady Hermione?

Lady H. Ah, Fido!

Dellow. [Suddenly, seeing her shoeless foot peeping out from under her dress.] By Jove! One shoe off, and one shoe on! What luck! [Coming up to her, insinuatingly.] Where's the other shoe? Ah, there it is! [Drops on his knees in front of LADY HERMIONE.] Now I'll show you what a first-class lady's-maid I am! Stubbs, chuck me over that shoe, will you?

[STUBBS has stood defiant, glaring at him.

He now seizes LADY HERMIONE'S shoe from floor.

Stubbs. Excuse me! I never allow my customers to be waited upon by unauthorized persons.

Dellow. Unauthorized!? What do you mean? Hand over that shoe!

Stubbs. [Firm.] Excuse me, Mr. Dellow. My business isn't conducted on these principles!

Dellow. Your business? Principles?! Confound your cheek! Give me that shoe!

Stubbs. The sooner you get up, Mr. Dellow, the sooner I can wait upon Lady Hermione.

Dellow. Lady Hermione, I want to show you what a dab I am at putting ladies' shoes on.

Lady H. Oh, I'm sure you're a mere bungling amateur. Now Mr. Stubbs is a professional. Mr. Stubbs, will you please——?

Stubbs. [Stiffly.] If you please, Mr. Dellow.

[*DELLOW gets up reluctantly.*

Stubbs. Thank you.

[*Kneels, puts on LADY HERMIONE'S other shoe, and buttons it up.*

Dellow. Harriet Treviss is coming down to Yavercliff with us.

Lady H. Alas! I'm not coming. I'm going down to Milly's by the four-thirty from Waterloo.

Dellow. Yes, that's the train, and you're coming to Yavercliff with Harriet and me.

[*LADY HERMIONE shakes her head.*

Stubbs. [*Busy buttoning.*] Where shall I send your new boots, my lady?

Lady H. To my sister's, Lady Mildred Starbuck, Rerebrook Hall.

Stubbs. I'll send them off this afternoon so that you'll get them the first thing to-morrow morning.

Lady H. Will you, please? I shall be there.

Dellow. What? Oh, I say, the "Leopardess" is off Yavercliff, and we shall just get down to her to dinner. We'll run out into the Channel to-morrow morning, and I'll put you up the Morchester creek in the afternoon. You'll get a train to Lady Milly's, and be there for dinner to-morrow night. Stubbs, have you got a Bradshaw?

Stubbs. There's one in the shop.

[*Having finished buttoning LADY HERMIONE'S boots.*

Dellow. Will you please get that Bradshaw, Stubbs?

[*Makes a sign to LADY HERMIONE to get rid of STUBBS, which STUBBS does not see.*

Lady H. Will you please get the Bradshaw, Mr. Stubbs?

[STUBBS shows a moment's hesitation, and then goes off into shop.

Dellow. Cheeky little beggar! I shall have to give him a lesson. I say, Lady Hermione, you don't mean to sell me? [Approaching her tenderly.

Lady H. Sell you, Fido? How can I? You are not my slave!

Dellow. That's just what I am! Your slave, body and soul! I've had the "Leopardess" specially fitted out in honour of your visit. The loveliest state cabin—and all the latest improvements. There's nothing I wouldn't do for you! Upon my soul and honour there isn't.

Lady H. Now, Fido, how many pretty ladies are you saying all these pretty things to?

Dellow. Not one. I know you don't believe me, but you've got hold of me as no other woman ever did, or ever will. Ask Harriet Treviss. She knows how desperately gone I am on you.

Lady H. Fido, this is really too bad! It's almost an insult!

Dellow. What?

Lady H. If you are so desperately "gone" on me, surely you might have poured out your passion to me instead of sending me to Harriet for a certificate of it.

Dellow. I have been trying to tell you how much I love you for the last six months, but you won't listen. You only chaff me and drive me nearly mad. Look here, Lady Hermione, you're coming down to Yavercliff to-night. You did promise, you know!

Lady H. Fido, I was very careful to promise you nothing.

Dellow. You said you'd heard a great deal about the "Leopardess," and you'd like to look over her if ever you got a chance. Well, the chance has come at last—the chance we've been waiting for all these months. And you're coming!

Lady H. [Looks at him, smiles in a tantalizing way.]
Impossible! [Shakes her head.]

Dellow. Why?

Lady H. I'm afraid of you, Fido! horribly afraid!

Dellow. All the same you're coming.

[Advancing to her, seizing her hand. She shrinks from him, evidently fascinated, as STUBBS enters from shop with Bradshaw.]

Stubbs. The Bradshaw, my lady.

[LADY HERMIONE takes the Bradshaw and hands it to DELLOW.]

Dellow. That will do, Stubbs. [Turns over the leaves of the Bradshaw, and looks up a time-table.] That will do, my good Stubbs.

[STUBBS, annoyed, is about to retort angrily, controls himself, pulls himself up with dignity that borders on the grotesque, and marches into the counting-house, seats himself there at desk.]

Dellow. [Busy with Bradshaw, in a low voice.] You're coming, you know.

[STUBBS is heard to bang ruler in the office. DELLOW closes office door, comes to her, You're coming, you know.]

Lady H. I'm not. Why should I?

Dellow. To see over her.

Lady H. But what is there to see?

Dellow. Come and see what there is to see.

Lady H. Would you be very much disappointed if I don't see what there is to see?

Dellow. Awfully.

Lady H. Then I won't disappoint you. There!

Dellow. Ah!

Lady H. You have a kodak on the "Leopardess"?

Dellow. Yes.

Lady H. You shall photograph all the objects you wish me to see, and write a full description underneath, and I'll read it carefully. That will save me the

trouble of going on board! And I can get to Milly's to-night! Do you see?

[*His face has clouded, and he looks very grim and malicious.*

Dellow. I say, Lady Hermione, I don't mind a woman fooling me a little. I rather like it, but I've had about six months of this, and I don't fancy I can stand a lot more.

Lady H. You terrify me.

Dellow. You won't carry it too far, will you?

Lady H. Can I carry it too far?

Dellow. Yes. I've done a few queer things, you know—

Lady H. So they say, Fido. So they say!

Dellow. And sometimes I'm not very particular what I do. I thought I'd just warn you.

Lady H. [*Gazing at him, half contemptuous, half fascinated.*] Fido, your cold-blooded villainy makes me shudder! Tell me frankly, what will you do if I go on the "Leopardess"?

Dellow. I'll give you a nice little dinner, and a rubber of Bridge with the Selincourts, and a jolly sail to-morrow, and land you near Rerebrook.

Lady H. Now tell me what you'll do if I don't go on the "Leopardess"?

Dellow. I shall simply hang about you till you do. But you'll come? You know you'll come!

[*Advancing to her.*

Stubbs. [*Comes out of counting-house, calls into shop.*] Miss Trimmer, please ask Mrs. Treviss to step this way.

[*MISS TRIMMER shows in MRS. TREVISS from the shop.* MRS. TREVISS enters, and *MISS TRIMMER disappears.*

Mrs. T. [*A well-dressed woman about thirty.*] Oh, here you both are.

Lady H. How are you, Harriet? [Kissing her.

Mrs. T. How d'ye do, dear? Fido!

Dellow. How are you, Harriet?

Mrs. T. Oh, Mr. Stubbs, I've called about my evening slippers. I'll speak to you directly.

Stubbs. If you please, ma'am.

[Goes to counter, takes up LADY HERMIONE'S boots, goes apart, begins to stretch them, taking a keen interest in the group, though his face is away from them.

Mrs. T. Well, what's going on?

Lady H. I am. I've a heap more shopping to do. Good-bye, dear. [Offering to kiss her.

Mrs. T. Good-bye?! You're coming to Yavercliff, eh, Fido?

Dellow. Of course she is.

Lady H. No. Indeed, no. I've heard such dreadful tales about the "Leopardess."

Dellow. Tales! What tales?

Lady H. That sometimes she won't answer to her rudder. That a certain dear little lady wished to be put safely ashore on dear old England's white cliffs; instead of which the recreant "Leopardess" sailed away with that dear little lady over the stormy main, and landed her a week after at Trouville, without a rag of reputation to bless herself with! And other shocking details! Good-bye, Fido. [Going.

Dellow. [Intercepts.] No! I say, Lady Hermione, I did try to land her at Weymouth. Upon my soul I did— [Catches sight of STUBBS, who has stopped in stretching the boots, and is eagerly listening.] Yes, that will do, Stubbs.

Stubbs. What, Mr. Dellow?

Dellow. We don't want you, Stubbs. You needn't wait.

[STUBBS, annoyed, puts the boots on the counter and marches off into the shop with ridiculous dignity. DELLOW closes door after him.

Dellow. That little chap begins to get on my nerves.

Lady H. You needn't have sent him away.

Dellow. I wanted to fix up our sail for to-night.

Mrs. T. I thought it was all arranged. [LADY HERMIONE shakes her head.] Sir Arthur hasn't gone to take his Roman bath?

Lady H. Yes, he has.

Mrs. T. You wrote me that if he went you'd join us on the "Leopardess" to-night, and go to Milly's to-morrow.

Lady H. Arthur wouldn't like me to go.

Mrs. T. My dear Hermione! I do congratulate you! And I do congratulate Sir Arthur! How long have you been like this?

Lady H. Always, I hope.

Mrs. T. How I have misjudged you! Fido, she isn't coming because her husband wouldn't like it! So she's going to disappoint us all and break up your party, because her husband wouldn't like it! Well, thank Heaven, I've met a model wife at last!

Lady H. Please don't talk like that! I'm not coming.

Mrs. T. But Milly doesn't expect you until to-morrow?

Lady H. No, but I could wire her.

Mrs. T. Indeed you shan't. I've thrown over the Mickleham people on purpose to come with you and —My dear Hermione, you've simply got to come! There! Fido, she's promised. It's settled! You've got to come!

Lady H. Well, we shall all be at Waterloo for the train, shan't we?

[Opening door of shop. STUBBS appears there.]

Stubbs. Shall I call a cab for you, my lady?

Lady H. Yes, please.

Dellow. I'll see you into it.

Lady H. No, don't come out. Bye-bye.

[Exit into shop.]

Dellow. [Calls after her.] Waterloo, quarter past four.

[He is following her off, but STUBBS shuts the door in his face and goes after LADY HERMIONE.]

Dellow. She'll come.

Mrs. T. Yes, I think.

Dellow. Thanks, awfully.

Mrs. T. Fido, I don't like this.

Dellow. What's the matter?

Mrs. T. I feel such a beast to her. I am a beast!

Dellow. Jolly good little beast you are too!

Mrs. T. Tell me—the Selincourts aren't on the "Leopardess"?

Dellow. Well, I asked them.

Mrs. T. You know they aren't coming. Fido, I won't do it! I've got a bit of conscience left.

Dellow. Oh lord, keep it from squirming then. I hate a woman when her conscience begins to squirm.

Mrs. T. I shall go down to Yavercliff with you and look after Hermione to-night. Our bet's off.

Dellow. Look here! I double it. Two hundred instead of one.

Mrs. T. [In great perplexity.] If I weren't in such a horrible hole for money!

Dellow. Well, five hundred then. I bet you five hundred pounds, Harriet, you come to Yavercliff to-night. If I lose, I post you the cheque to-morrow.

Mrs. T. [Looks straight at him.] Fido, you are a fiend!

Dellow. I ain't a bad sort of chap to my pals, especially to women. You'll send the wire?

Mrs. T. Yes. Where?

Dellow. To the "Leopardess," off Yavercliff. What are you going to say?

Mrs. T. My brother Jack suddenly taken ill. Can't come. Must go to him.

Dellow. All right. Good-bye. [Offering hand.]

Mrs. T. Good-bye. [Shaking hands.]

STUBBS enters, from shop, to hear them say good-bye,
and see them shaking hands.

Dellow. I say, Stubbs, don't you interfere in your customers' private affairs, there's a good little chap!

Stubbs. Thank you, sir. I trust I shall always behave quite properly to my customers.

Dellow. Yes, but you keep your distance, my good little Stubbs, and then you'll keep your customers. See? [With a warning nod.]

Stubbs. Thank you, sir. Much obliged to you for teaching me my business. [Exit DELLOW into shop.]

Mrs. T. [Is following DELLOW, stops.] Oh, my slippers! Send them to Onslow Crescent, will you?

Stubbs. Yes, ma'am. To-night?

Mrs. T. Yes, to-night, please.

Stubbs. They shall be sent, ma'am.

[Exit MRS. TREVISS into shop, and off. Left alone, STUBBS shows great perplexity and irritation, paces furiously up and down, snatches up the Bradshaw, turns up a time table, bangs the Bradshaw on counter, takes up LADY HERMIONE'S boots, bangs them down, walks a step or two in irritation, stops with a sudden resolution, goes eagerly to the telephone address book on counter, hunts up an address, goes to telephone, rings up furiously.

Enter FLORA, door right, with outdoor clothes on, to notice his later movements.

Flora. Anything the matter?

Stubbs. Change your dress. Pack for the seaside!

Flora. Seaside?!

Stubbs. Hillo! Hillo! Yes, we're off to Yavercliff. Look alive!

Flora. Yavercliff! What for?

Stubbs. I'll tell you as we go along!—Hillo! Hillo! Are you there?

Flora. But old man——

Stubbs. Be off and pack up! We haven't a moment to lose! Sharp's the word!

Flora. All right, old man. [Exit, door right.]

Stubbs. [Alternately shouting into the telephone, and growling out threats and imprecations against DELLOW.] Hillo! Hillo! [Growls.] You'll teach me my business, will you, Mr. Fido? I'll give you a lesson before I've done with you. [Shouts.] Please give me four eleven, Hop. Eh? Yes. [Growls.] And you can take her hand, you blackguard, and make love to her under my nose! While I—I've got to keep my distance, have I? Yes. [Shouts.] Is that the Superintendent's office, Waterloo Station? I'm Roland Stubbs, Piccadilly. I want a special train to Yavercliff at once. Yes, I must have it. Eh? Well, just find out, will you? [Growls.] I suppose you think you can treat her as you've done the others, damn you! But you don't, Mr. Fido! You don't! [Listens in telephone, shouts.] All right, I'll bring the money with me. Eh? [Growls.] If it wasn't such a dirty thing to do, I'd go straight to her husband and expose you. [Shouts.] All right! Yavercliff, yes! Special train! One carriage! Eh? Only two passengers! Get up the steam! I'll be there in half an hour! I must be at Yavercliff front of the four thirty. Right! [Rings off the telephone.] Keep my distance, Mr. Fido? Keep my distance? Yes, I'll keep my distance——

[Exit, right. The telephone rings off vigorously as Curtain falls.

Four hours pass between Acts I. and II.



ACT II.

SCENE I: *Room in the Crab and Lobster at Yavercliff.*

A large bow-window is thrown out at back on the right side, and shows a harbour with masts of small boats and a cliff headland. A door near the centre at back opens out on the same scene, and gives the impression of a small second-rate seaside place, more fishing-village than watering-place. A door, right, leading to bar of the hotel. A door up stage, left, is reached by two stairs which are evidently the lowest steps of a staircase. A fireplace down stage, right, filled up with streamers of coloured paper. In the window a writing-table with writing materials. Old faded worsted curtains close over and shut out the window and table when they are drawn. A table along the wall, left, another on the left side at back, another on the right side. The tables are long and narrow, such as are generally used in the coffee-room of an hotel, but there are no table-cloths on them, nor does the room give any other evidence of being the ordinary coffee-room. Chairs are placed with their seats under the different tables. A sofa on the left side of the room, facing towards right. The furniture is old, the carpets worn, the curtains and chair covers torn and dirty. The whole place gives a sensation of musty discomfort.

TIME: about seven on the same day.

Discover, seated at table in window, HARVEY DIX, a young journalist about twenty-eight, pleasant, pushing, energetic, keen. He is writing with face to

window. Enter, door right, HOBDAY, the proprietor of the *Crab and Lobster*, a fat, brain-muddled, oily, beery philosopher of fifty. He has a telegram in his hand, which he has just opened.

Hobday.



BEG pardon, sir, you've decided to stay the night?

Dix. [Writing.] Yes, Hobday.

Hob. Because I've just had this telegram [*reading*], "Please reserve two bedrooms and private sitting-room for self and sister.—ROLAND STUBBS." It happens rather awkward.

Dix. What?

Hob. There aint much demand for private sitting-rooms at Yavercliff, so in general I make this the coffee-room. But say, for instance, I get a honeymoon couple in, or Mr. Dellow puts in with his yacht and wants a private suite for a private lady friend, then, I turn the big smoking-room into a coffee-room, and I make this a tempory private sitting-room.

Dix. Then you want me to turn out?

Hob. If you wouldn't mind taking dinner in the other coffee-room—

Dix. The smoking-room?

Hob. I could then reserve these private rooms for this gentleman—[referring to telegram] Mr. Stubbs.

Dix. All right. Give me my dinner in the other coffee-room. I'm off first train to-morrow morning. [*Rising from the table with large envelope in his hand.*] You know, Hobday, with all this fine scenery and keen air, Yavercliff ought to be a big fashionable watering-place.

Hob. Think so, sir?

Dix. And the *Crab and Lobster* ought to be a big fashionable hotel, with a couple of hundred bedrooms.

Hob. [Shakes his head.] I doubt it, sir, I doubt it. I've lived all my life in Yavercliff, and—well, look at

the place—what is it? a little fishing in the winter, a yacht now and then, and a few visitors in the summer as come down and pick up shells for the first hour, and then sit melancholy on the beach wondering what they shall do with themselves till they go home again. That's Yavercliff!

Dix. Well, I've given Yavercliff a good dusting in to-morrow's "Englishman."

[Indicating the letter he has in his hand

Hob. You're the gentleman that writes under the name of "Searchlight," aren't you?

Dix. Yes. I'm taking my holiday all along this coast and I'm going to give all these dead-alive holes a thorough waking up.

Hob. Well, sir, it's wanted. It's wonderful what power the press has got, but I doubt whether you'll ever wake up Yavercliff. I doubt it.

Dix. We shall see!

Hob. It was you that wrote all those beautiful articles about the jealousy stabbing case, wasn't it?

Dix. Yes. That poor girl would have got seven years if I hadn't championed her cause in "The Englishman." As it was, she got three offers of marriage before she left jail!

Hob. Most extraordinary interesting case! And a warning to all! As showing what depths the female nature is capable of, when aggravated.

Dix. Yes. That was the first big job I did for our paper. Sent up our circulation forty thousand in one week!

Hob. Ah, sir! I wish we could get up something exciting for you at Yavercliff! Just to give you a better opinion of the place! But, bless you! Jealousy stabbing cases? Murder, or such like? We haven't had one for years past! And then it was five miles away!

Dix. Never mind, Hobday, if you can't regale me with a choice, gruesome murder, let me have a fresh fried sole and a grilled chicken. It's better to sleep on.

Hob. Ah, sir! You newspaper gentlemen will have your joke.

Dix. Dinner at eight, Hobday.

[Exit at back, leaving door open.

Hob. [Calls after him.] It shall be ready, sir. Whiting and chicken.

Enter AGATHA, the waitress, right.

Agatha. The gentleman and lady that telegraphed for the private rooms.

Enter right, STUBBS and FLORA. They have changed their clothes. STUBBS is in a blue suit and soft hat. FLORA is in a quiet, well-fitting, seaside dress. *Exit AGATHA.*

Hob. [Taking out telegram.] Good day, sir. Mr. Roland Stubbs?

Stubbs. Yes. My sister.

Hob. Good day, ma'am.

Flora. Good afternoon.

Hob. I've reserved the rooms, sir. This will be the sitting-room.

Stubbs. [Looking round.] All right.

Hob. And the bedrooms are up this private staircase. You see, sir, it's most convenient—a private door here, and you're out on the beach—a private staircase there, leading straight up to your own apartments, which being shut off from all the rest of the house, there you are, as snug and private as you could wish!

[FLORA goes up to window and looks out.

Stubbs. All right.

Hob. There are three bedrooms belonging to the suite—

Stubbs. I want only two.

Hob. It's usual to take all three of the bedrooms, sir, on account of anyone occupying the other room having to pass through your private sitting-room, and up your private staircase.

Stubbs. [Goes to door at back, looks out.] Oh, very well.

[AGATHA brings in, right, a gentleman's small dressing-case, and a lady's small trunk.]

Agatha. The lady's and gentleman's luggage.

[Exit.]

Hob. [Going to luggage.] Shall you be staying long, sir?

Stubbs. I can't say.

Hob. What time shall you require dinner, sir?

Stubbs. I don't know.

Hob. [Taking up the luggage.] I'll just show you to your rooms, sir.

Stubbs. That's rather a fine yacht off there.

Hob. Yes, sir. The "Leopardess." She belongs to Mr. Dellow; an extraordinary, nice, pleasant gentleman, sir.

Stubbs. Oh! Is he?

Hob. [In an aside to STUBBS, with a wink.] But otherwise a regular Don Juann with the ladies.

Stubbs. Oh! Is he?

Hob. This way, please, sir.

[Exit HOBDAY at staircase, dragging up the two portmanteaux after him.]

Flora. Well, here we are!

Stubbs. Yes.

Flora. And what do you suppose you're going to do now you are here?

Stubbs. I don't know. I feel sure he's got some rascally scheme on with Mrs. Treviss.

Flora. Suppose he has? What can you do?

Stubbs. [Shaking his fist out of the window.] I can blow that confounded "Leopardess" to smithereens!

Flora. Do talk sensibly, Roland. And that special train! What did we want a special train for?

Stubbs. To get down here before them.

Flora. But the expense!

Stubbs. [Turns round furiously on her.] Expense?!

Flora, you've got no soul, no imagination! You haven't one spark of fine feeling in all your composition! I've lived with you all these years, and I've never heard you express one generous, noble sentiment; or burst out into appreciation of poetry; or raise yourself for one single moment above the dead dreary level of ordinary, stupid, everyday life! And it's—it's—*[Makes a futile, angry gesture in the air.]* Well, I tell you this, old girl, it simply takes all the pluck out of me to find my ideals and aspirations everlastingly squashed out of me by your dull, silly, shortsighted, damnable common-sense!

[Sits down in despair.]

Flora. *[Very quiet.]* It's lucky for you, Roland, that I have got some common sense. I've often saved you from wasting your money, and making a fool of yourself.

Stubbs. Well, don't do it again, there's a dear, good girl! Let me waste my money! Let me make a fool of myself! It's my way of enjoying life!

Hob. *[Voice heard up the stairs.]* If you'll please look at your rooms, sir?

Stubbs. *[Rising.]* Come along! There! I didn't mean to speak unkindly. *[Kisses her.]* You aren't a bad sort, if you'll only remember it's your business in life to inflate me, instead of deflating me as you're always doing!

Flora. I won't deflate you to-night. How can I help you, old man?

Stubbs. Their train ought to be in. Our special was only a few minutes in front. *[Going up to window, looking off right. She follows him.]* Look at that black-guard "Leopardess"—*[Shaking his fist again.]*

Flora. There's a little boat putting off from her. That may be to fetch them!

Stubbs. Yes. Keep your eyes on that boat! *[Suddenly, looking off.]* Hush! They're here!

[Motions her away from window.]

Hob. *[Voice from upstairs.]* This way, please, sir.

[STUBBS motions her to go upstairs. She does so. He creeps again to window, looks off, right, suddenly darts across the room to staircase and exit, closing door after him. DELLOW and LADY HERMIONE cross the window. DELLOW opens the door at back and enters, LADY HERMIONE remaining at door.

Lady H. Is this the best hotel in Yavercliff?

Dellow. It's the only one. Come in, and have a look at it. [LADY HERMIONE enters and looks round.] Not quite your style, eh?

Lady H. It seems fairly comfortable.

Dellow. But I can't allow you to stay here, when there's the loveliest cabin waiting for you on the "Leopardess."

Lady H. Fido, you have the appearance and manners of an English yachtsman; but I suspect you to be really a pirate captain in disguise, and capable of any crime against defenceless womanhood. Now if I go on board and dine, and have one rubber at Bridge, you will please send Flitton and me back here punctually at ten o'clock?

Dellow. Of course.

Lady H. Your solemn promise.

Dellow. I promise.

Lady H. Honour of a pirate captain?

Dellow. Yes, of course.

Lady H. I can't think what has happened to Harriet. You're sure the Selincourts are on board?

Dellow. They ought to have got down last night.

Lady H. They ought! But did they? Does anyone do as he, or she ought when once aboard your lawless lugger. You know it's the very desperate character of you and your crew that has tempted me to accept your hospitality for one brief hour, so that I may have the breathless sensation of escaping from some horrible, unknown danger!

Dellow. I say, I wish you wouldn't keep on chaffing me!

Lady H. I must, Fido! You surely wouldn't have me take you seriously?

Dellow. You won't, eh?

Lady H. If I did, do you think I should be here for a moment? My dear Fido! [Going up to window.] But I wish Harriet had come.

Dellow. She has missed the train. She'll turn up by the next.

Lady H. That cliff seems to be toppling over on the "Leopardess."

Dellow. That's Deadman's Point.

Lady H. [Shudders playfully.] Deadman's Point! I wish you mariners wouldn't choose such terrible, shuddery names! Fido, all the auguries are against me! I'll go back to Flitton and the luggage, and get on to Milly's to-night.

Dellow. [Suddenly, and fiercely.] You can't now! You shan't! [She looks surprised.] I mean, there's no train to Rerebrook.

HOBDAY enters from staircase.

Hob. Mr. Dellow, sir!

Dellow. We came in at the private entrance, Hobday.

Hob. Well, sir, you ought to feel at home here.

Dellow. This lady and her maid will require the sitting-room and bedroom suite——

Hob. I'm very sorry, sir, I've just let them to another gentleman and his sister.

Dellow. [To LADY HERMIONE.] You'll have to try the "Leopardess" after all.

Lady H. No. [To HOBDAY.] Haven't you any other rooms?

Hob. There's a beautiful bedroom on the other side.

Lady H. And one for my maid close to it?

Hob. Yes, ma'am, leading out of it.

Lady H. They will do.

Dellow. I say, you won't stay here the night?

Lady H. Positively I will. So please go back to the station and ask Flitton to bring our luggage on here.

Dellow. [At door.] There's the gig just come from the "Leopardess" to fetch us. How long before you're ready?

Lady H. A quarter of an hour.

Dellow. All right. The gig will wait for us at those steps.

[Exit DELLOW at back, passes by window and off right.

Lady H. Will you let the chambermaid show me to my room?

Hob. Just one moment, ma'am, so that we can make it nice and tidy for you first.

[Exit HOBDAY, right. Left alone, LADY HERMIONE shows considerable uneasiness and irresolution, walks about a little, and then suddenly resolves to run away; is going hurriedly to door at back when it is opened by DIX who enters, hat on, and humming a tune. He stops dead in front of her, leaves off humming, takes off hat, and they stand for a moment looking at each other.

Dix. I beg pardon. I left my note-book on this table.

[Goes up to table, takes up a note-book which he had previously left there, and goes off right. LADY HERMIONE stands irresolute, and is again going towards door when STUBBS enters from staircase.

Lady H. [Much surprised.] Mr. Stubbs!

Stubbs. Yes, my lady. I brought my sister down for a breath of fresh air. She gets a little seedy in town sometimes.

Lady H. It's rather curious you should fix upon Yavercliff—

Stubbs. I've happened to hear Yavercliff mentioned by customers several times lately. So I said to Flo, "I've got a day to spare to-morrow. Now, where shall we go! Yavercliff! Why not Yavercliff?" Well, no sooner said, my lady, than we changed our clothes, packed up our little traps, off to Waterloo, and here we are!

Lady H. Strange! I didn't notice you at either station—

Stubbs. Oh, my lady, I just pop about and in and out, and nobody takes much notice of me. There's a great advantage in being insignificant, my lady!

Lady H. Well, I hope you'll enjoy your holiday.

Stubbs. Thank you, my lady. [Suddenly.] My lady, I'm very sorry. I quite forgot to send on your boots.

Lady H. It's of no consequence. [Going off right.]

Stubbs. I hope, my lady, you won't think I'm intruding by coming to Yavercliff?

Lady H. Why should I? Anyone can come to Yavercliff who can afford the train fare.

Stubbs. [With a little grin to himself.] Yes, my lady. . .

[As LADY HERMIONE[®] is going off, FLITTON, her maid, enters.]

Lady H. Oh, Flitton, where's our luggage?

Flitton. In the passage here, my lady. [Pointing off.] Oh, my lady, they've just shown me our rooms, and I'm sure your ladyship couldn't sleep in such a place. And the room they've given me is nothing but a cupboard. And the noise, your ladyship! And the language of the sailors! And the odours!

Stubbs. My lady, allow me to place my rooms at your disposal. Will your ladyship please just to look over them? My sister's room has a beautiful bow window, with a splendid view of Deadman's Point—

Lady H. Deadman's Point! I should have nightmares all night! Come, Flitton, let's look at our rooms, and see whether we can make them do.

[*Exit, right.*

Flitton. Oh, what a hole!

[*Exit after LADY HERMIONE.* STUBBS goes up to door, looks off after them, comes in, stands pensively.]

Enter FLORA from staircase.

Flora. Well, old man?

Stubbs. I can't size it out at all. She has taken rooms here, and is going to stay the night. Now what's he going to do? Where is he now?

Flora. [*Looking out of window.*] That little boat from the yacht has come in to those steps? The boatmen look as if they were waiting for somebody.

Stubbs. Yes. [*Suddenly.*] I say, old girl, go down and get into talk with the boatmen. Show a great interest in the "Leopardess." Find out who's on board; and how long she's staying off Yavercliff.

Flora. Right, old man.

Stubbs. Get to know where she's bound for when she leaves here. [*Opening door at back for her.*] Give them some money.

Flora. Won't that look suspicious?

Stubbs. No. Bribe every man-jack of his crew.

Flora. How much?

Stubbs. Any amount. Shower it on 'em! Ferret out everything.

Flora. I will, I promise you.

Stubbs. Off you go! [*Kisses her, pats her on the back, shuts door after her, comes in, stands pensive.*] Now, Mr. Fido Leopardess—

[*Begins to light a cigar. As he is doing so,*

DELLOW enters right, starts back a little in surprise at seeing STUBBS. STUBBS

*breaks off in the act of lighting his cigar,
and gives DELLOW a nod of recognition.*

Dellow. Hullo! [Looks at him.] Stubbs! [STUBBS, having lighted his cigar, gives him another nod.] So you've got down here?

Stubbs. Looks very much like it.

Dellow. Oh!

[Pulls out the armchair, seats himself and lights a cigar. STUBBS seats himself on sofa, takes out a newspaper from his pocket, smokes and reads.

Dellow. What brings you here, Stubbs?

Stubbs. The train, Mr. Dellow.

Dellow. Down for a little holiday?

Stubbs. Well, perhaps a little business and pleasure combined.

Dellow. [Sits and smokes a moment, then suddenly remembers something, and turns suddenly to STUBBS.] Stubbs!

Stubbs. Sir?

Dellow. You were in your shop at three o'clock; and there's no train down here between two-forty and four-thirty.

Stubbs. Isn't there?

Dellow. You didn't come by the four-thirty.

Stubbs. Didn't I?

Dellow. No. I saw all the Yavercliff passengers get out. [STUBBS continues smoking and reading. DELLOW looks at him and shows great annoyance.] Stubbs! [STUBBS looks up.] How did you get to Yavercliff before me?

Stubbs. Oh, in these days of improved communication, people seem to get about the country as if by magic, don't they?

Dellow. Yes, but—— [Suddenly.] Stubbs, you didn't motor down?

Stubbs. No, Mr. Dellow.

Dellow. Then how the deuce——?

HOBDAY enters, right, with a parasol.

Hob. I beg pardon, sir, a porter has brought this in. He says you must have left it in your special train.

Stubbs. Yes, it belongs to my sister. Put it over there. Please give the man a couple of shillings.

Hob. [Putting down the parasol.] Yes, sir.

[Exit HOBDAY.]

Dellow. So you had a special train down from London, eh, Stubbs? [STUBBS says nothing. DELLOW, puzzled and annoyed, looks at him, at length goes up to the armchair, wheels it so as to front STUBBS, and sits down resolutely.] Stubbs! [STUBBS looks up.] Until this afternoon, I always thought you were a decent, obliging little chap, who knew your station.

Stubbs. So I do, Mr. Dellow. And my station this evening was Yavercliff.

Dellow. Don't be cheeky, Stubbs. I want to know why you were paying attention to everything I was saying and doing in your shop this afternoon, eh?

Stubbs. It wasn't with the idea of copying you, I assure you.

Dellow. And now I find you followed me down here on a special train!

Stubbs. Excuse me! You followed me down on the four-thirty ordinary!

Dellow. Look here, Stubbs—don't you come prying into my affairs. You keep yourself to yourself.

Stubbs. Yes. Would you please set me the example, and clear out of my sitting-room?

Dellow. Your sitting-room?!

Stubbs. My private sitting-room.

Dellow. Oh, yes, I'd forgotten [rising] Hobday told me he'd let it. So you take a private sitting-room, Stubbs?

Stubbs. Yes. After the toils of business, it enables me to enjoy the magnificent view, and the invigorat-

ing breezes, in my own company. And my own company is always good enough for me.

[Opening the door, right, for DELLOW.

Dellow. Oh! [Going off, stops, shows great annoyance.] I say, Stubbs——

Stubbs. Well?

Dellow. You keep your station, will you? There's a good little man! I don't like your gassing about all over the country in private sitting-rooms and special trains. I don't like it!

Stubbs. Don't you? Some men might not like your gassing about all over the country with their wives——

Dellow. [Enraged.] What the devil do you mean, you little——

[Is about to strike STUBBS. STUBBS instantly shows fight, but at that moment FLORA enters at back, and the two men desist.

Stubbs. Well, dear? [Makes her a sign of silence. She understands, looks at DELLOW, and whispers to STUBBS.] All right. Thank you. Just leave me a moment. [She goes off. STUBBS comes up fiercely to DELLOW.] You're going to sail away to Dieppe tonight! And she doesn't know!

Dellow. Look here, Stubbs, do you see that thick, green, muddy pea-soup floating round the harbour steps there? [Pointing outside.]

Stubbs. [Loudly.] You're going to sneak away with Lady Hermione! You've got rid of Mrs. Treviss on purpose!

Dellow. If you don't hold your tongue, Stubbs, my boatmen will give you a ducking in that pea-soup.

Stubbs. [Sticking up at him defiantly.] Oh no, they won't! And you won't do a clean walk over to France, Mr. Fido, with Lady Hermione on board!

Dellow. Lady Hermione is going to dine with me and her friends on my yacht, and then she's coming back here to sleep. That's our programme, and it's no business of yours, you damned little shoemaker!

[Going off, right.

Stubbs. Don't you go out of that door, Mr. Dellow.
 [Shouts.] Help!

[*Not loudly enough to be heard, but loudly enough to intimidate DELLOW.*

Dellow. [Closes the door; turns to STUBBS.] Hold your tongue, you fool! You don't want to drag Lady Hermione into a mess, do you?

Stubbs. No, I'm going to keep her out of one.

[*DELLow looks him up and down; utters a contemptuous exclamation; again opens the door and is going off.*

Stubbs. [Threateningly.] Don't you put your nose outside that door, Mr. Dellow. If you do—

Dellow. [Closes door; comes up to him, is about to strike him.] Well, what then?

Stubbs. I'm going to recognize you as the man who betrayed my poor, long-lost cousin!

Dellow. What?

Stubbs. And left her to poison her helpless babe. On her father's doorstep. Where she was found by her broken-hearted mother. And I tell you this, Mr. Fido, I'm going to kick up such a shindy about it that no lady will go two steps in your company to-night in Yavercliff! [*Yelps out in the same quietly threatening tone.*] Help!

Dellow. Hold your row!

Stubbs. If I do, will you go quietly aboard your yacht, and leave Lady Hermione here, and not see her again to-night?

Dellow. [After a pause of indecision.] No, I'm hanged if I'll be dictated to by a—

[*Opening the door, right.*

Stubbs. [Instantly yelps out.] Help!

Dellow. [Shuts door instantly, and comes to STUBBS.] Will you be quiet, or shall I—

HOBDAY opens the door, right, and looks in.

Hob. What is it, sir?

Dellow. Nothing, Hobday.

Hob. I thought I heard somebody shouting for help.

Dellow. No, it's all right! It's nothing!

[Exit HOBDAY.

Stubbs. Now, Mr. Dellow, which is it to be? [Suddenly yelps out again.] Help! Because if you don't take yourself off, I shan't leave you till—well, I promise you, from prehistoric times onwards, Yavercliff has never seen or heard such an infernal row as I shall kick up to-night!

Dellow. There must be no row, for Lady Hermione's sake!

Stubbs. Just so. Well, you take care there isn't one! [Yelps.] Help!

Dellow. Quiet! She may be involved!

Stubbs. Oh no, she won't! My poor betrayed long-lost cousin will be involved! I invented her on purpose. [Yelps out a little louder.] Help!

Dellow. Hush! [Walks about a step or two, then speaks very quietly.] All right, Stubbs, I daresay you're right! I'll go. But I've asked Lady Hermione to dine with me on the "Leopardess," and I can't run away from her without saying a word.

Stubbs. I'll take her a message.

Dellow. She wouldn't like that. You see, she's here in rather a delicate position. We must think of her reputation.

Stubbs. [Grins.] Yes, we must. Me especially.

Dellow. I'll just go to her.

Stubbs. So will I.

Dellow. Stubbs, I shall have to give you a lesson.

Stubbs. I think it's my turn to give you one. You've given me one lesson to-day.

Dellow. In attending to your business.

Stubbs. Yes, well, bootmaking is my business; love-

making is yours. You've shown me how to attend to mine. Now I'll show you how to attend to yours.

HOBDAY enters, right.

Hob. [To DELLOW.] The lady asked me to say she's waiting in the coffee-room, sir.

Dellow. I'll go to her.

Stubbs. I beg pardon, Mr. Dellow, we haven't settled our little business yet. [To HOBDAY.] Will you ask the lady if she'll kindly see Mr. Dellow here?

[HOBDAY looks surprised, and exit.

Dellow. I say, Stubbs, you know you're quite right about this. I can see that now, and I blame myself very much for what I've done.

Stubbs. That's all right. Keep in that frame of mind.

Dellow. You leave her for a moment with me. You can wait outside and watch me go off in the boat. I can't get away without your seeing me.

Stubbs. Well. Only one moment, then——

Enter LADY HERMIONE, door right.

Mr. Dellow wishes to speak to your ladyship for a moment.

[Exit at back.

Lady H. What's the matter now?

[DELLOW very cautiously watches STUBBS off at back.

Dellow. Would you believe it? That little beast took a special train down from Waterloo on purpose to watch us.

Lady H. No!

Dellow. Yes. I've just dragged it all out of him! And he's spying on us still.

Lady H. The little wretch! How dare he?

Dellow. However, I've thrown him off the scent. I've greened him that you aren't coming. So I'll put off from the steps in the gig and make as if I was going

to the "Leopardess." You go back to the coffee-room, slip out of the other door, and saunter round to the end of the little pier yonder. I'll pick you up there.

Lady H. Fido, I won't go!

Dellow. What? I say! You aren't afraid of Stubbs?

Lady H. Afraid!

Dellow. I didn't think you'd haul down your flag for a confounded little shoemaker!

Lady H. Fido, don't be absurd. [After a pause.] If I come, I shall bring Flitton. And I must get back here at ten!

Dellow. [Opening door, right, for her.] All right. I'll be waiting for you at the pier yonder in five minutes.

Re-enter STUBBS at back as LADY HERMIONE is going off.

Dellow. Good-night, Lady Hermione. Sorry you aren't coming. [To STUBBS.] Lady Hermione was going to dine with me, but the tides are a little treacherous about here—

Stubbs. Yes, they are—

Dellow. So she has cried off. [To LADY HERMIONE.] You'll be going to Rerebrook in the morning. Remember me to Lady Milly, will you?

Lady H. Yes, I will.

[Exit, right. DELLOW closes door after her.

Dellow. I managed that rather neatly, eh, Stubbs? Sorry we had our little kick-up just now. But you were right, after all. Decent little chap, aren't you, Stubbs? [Patting STUBBS on the shoulder. STUBBS shows annoyance, and withdraws.] Good-night, Stubbs! You watch me off from the steps! Keep your eye on me, my little Stubbs!

[Exit at back. STUBBS follows him to door, and stands watching him. It is now growing dark, and one or two lights appear on the ships outside. AGATHA

brings in a lamp, puts it on the table, turns it up. STUBBS still stands at door. FLORA comes up to him; he whispers to her, and points off after DILLOW.

Enter HOBDAY, right. Exit AGATHA, right. STUBBS comes into room.

Hob. Now, sir, shall I take your order for dinner?

Stubbs. [Closes door at back, comes in, showing great satisfaction.] Dinner?! I'd forgotten all about dinner! But now I come to think of it, I've got a tremendous appetite.

Hob. Ah! Our Yavercliff air, sir! It works wonders! Will you dine here, sir, or in the coffee-room?

Stubbs. I don't mind. Is there a table d'hôte dinner?

Hob. Yes, sir. In a manner of speaking, there is a table d'hôte dinner, though there's only one gentleman going to partake of it; a newspaper gentleman, Mr. Harvey Dix. Writes all them beautiful articles in "The Englishman" under the name of "Searchlight."

Stubbs. "Searchlight"? Oh yes! Is he dining at the table d'hôte?

Hob. Yes, sir.

Stubbs. What are you going to give us?

[Rubbing his hands.]

Hob. A nice fresh whiting and chicken.

Stubbs. I don't care much for that. You see, I'd promised my sister a little French dinner to-night, and I should like to give her something rather out of the common.

Hob. Of course you would, sir.

Stubbs. Now, what can you give us?

Hob. A nice dish of chops, sir? And some nice chipped potatoes?

[With the air of announcing a discovery.]

Stubbs. What else?

Hob. [Doubtfully.] I might be able to get a

steak, sir, but I wouldn't recommend it. It might be tough—

Stubbs. I'm sure it would. Chop or steak? What else?

Hob. Otherwise the whiting and chicken; otherwise anything you might fancy!

Stubbs. Well, what?

Hob. [Has another inspiration.] Would you like some nice bacon and eggs?

Stubbs. No. Not for dinner.

Hob. [After a thoughtful pause.] If you was to be here in two months' time, I might be able to give you a partridge.

Stubbs. Yes, but I want some dinner to-night.

Hob. To be sure you do, sir. And what shall it be?

Stubbs. Well, what shall it?

Hob. Well, sir, I aint here to dictate to you. I'm here to attend to your orders, and make you happy.

Stubbs. I'm fearfully hungry.

Hob. [Triumphantly.] Ah, sir, that's the best sauce after all! Now, what do you say to some nice cold ham, and nice pickled walnuts?

Stubbs. [Discouraged.] No!

Hob. Well, sir, only say what you'd like?

FLORA enters at back.

Flora. Roland!

Stubbs. [Stops, seeing her face.] What is it? [She glances at HOBDAY. STUBBS goes up to her. She whispers something in his ear, pointing off at window.] No! The blackguard! [Goes to window, looks off, then suddenly turns to HOBDAY.] Who's your best boatman in Yavercliff?

Hob. What's the matter, sir?

DIX appears at door, right, and watches.

Stubbs. I want a boat at once! And a boatman that can row like the devil! Who's your best man?

Hob. Ben Mackett!

Stubbs. Mackett? Good!

Hob. But dinner, sir!

Stubbs. When I come back! Mackett! I shall want you, Flo! Come along! After them, quick!

Flo. I'm ready.

[Exit at back. STUBBS is following her.

Hob. But what about dinner, sir?

Stubbs. [Pushing him aside.] Dinner be hanged! [Goes off, calling] Hillo! Is Mackett there? Hillo! Mackett! Mackett! Mackett!

[HOBDAY goes to window and looks off. DIX goes to door, looks off.

Dix. What on earth is up now, Hobday?

[HOBDAY makes a bewildered, helpless gesture.

STUBBS'S voice is heard, off, calling,
"Mackett! Ben Mackett! Is Mackett
there? Where are you? Mackett! Mac-
kett!"

CURTAIN.

Five hours pass between Acts II. and III.



ACT III.

SCENE: *The same at about one the next morning. The window curtains are open, and the moon is full on the sea. A table towards centre is laid for two, with a supper of cold ham, pickles, cheese, etc.*

Discover HOBDAY at door of staircase, listening.

Enter DIX, door right.

Dix.



NYTHING fresh, Hobday?

Hob. I've just taken the lady's luggage upstairs.

Dix. Most extraordinary affair!

Hob. Well, sir, after a regular flare-up like this you can't complain that Yavercliff wants waking up.

Dix. How did the accident happen?

Hob. So far as I can make out, they was rowing the lady and her maid back from the "Leopardess" in the gig, and just as they got to the pier-head a biggish wave come along, and the lady's maid screamed and jumped out sudden; and in so doing she stepped on the side of the boat, and capsized it. And all of 'em went in except the lady's maid and she jumped ashore and screeched.

Dix. I wonder who this lady can be?

[*Going towards staircase door.*

Hob. You've hit the nail bang on the head there, sir. Who can she be?

Enter AGATHA, left, with a band-box and a brown paper parcel, and a cloak.

Hob. [Stopping AGATHA as she crosses to staircase.] How much more is there?

Aga. This is all.

Hob. [Examining the parcels.] No name on it!

Aga. Oh, these belong to the lady's maid.

[Exit AGATHA at staircase with parcels.]

Hob. No name on any of the luggage!

Dix. Why did you let them take her up to this man Stubbs's rooms?

Hob. Well, just as she got to that door she begun to faint clean off, and Mr. Stubbs says, "Take her up to my sister's room," he says, "it's more comfortable up there." Well, as he'd been risking his life to bring the lady ashore, I thought it was only fair he should temporary dispose of her.

Dix. I suppose she'll stay the night there now.

Hob. She's had a fire lighted to dry her clothes, and I've just sent her up the remains of the table d'hôte dinner.

Dix. Then she must have quite recovered?

Hob. I judge so.

Re-enter AGATHA at staircase.

Hob. What are they up to now, Agatha?

Aga. The lady's maid took in her parcels and said "Good night," and the little gentleman what you lent your clothes to popped his head out of the room where he's dressing. "Just see that my supper is ready," he says, "for I'm starving. And ask the landlord to give me a bottle of his best claret," he says.

Hob. My best claret? He shall have it!

Aga. "And tell him I shall shake down for the night on the sofa."

Hob. Well, there's his sofa for him to shake down on.

Aga. I suppose I can go to bed now?

[*Going off left.*

Hob. [*Looking at watch.*] Ten past one. Yes; time for all of us to be trotting upstairs.

Dix. I say, my girl, Mackett is having some supper in there. Just tell him I want to see him again before he goes.

Aga. Yes, sir.

[*Exit left.*

Dix. [*Going towards staircase.*] Who can this lady be? And who is Stubbs himself?

Hob. He had a special train down from Waterloo.

Dix. Special train? He must be somebody of importance! Well, whoever he is, he's a plucky little fellow!

Hob. Plucky? Stubbs beat fireworks! Off his own bat!

MACKETT, *a burly, stolid, humorous-taciturn boatman about fifty, appears at door, left.*

Dix. Ah, Mackett! You've finished supper?

Mack. I have.

Dix. Now I want to get to the bottom of this exciting adventure!

Mack. [*Stolidly.*] You do, do you, sir?

Dix. [*Referring to his note-book, and making further notes as he goes along.*] Just before dinner Mr. Stubbs engaged you to row after the gig from the "Leopardess?"

Mack. He did. "Hurry up," he says. "Row like blazes! Any money you like to name!"

Dix. But you couldn't come up with the gig?

Mack. Never got within hail of her. Rowed fit to split ourselves. "Leopardess" weighed anchor, and off afore we got half across the bay.

Dix. What happened next?

Mack. Little gent let on terrible, shook his fist and stamped his feet. Sister shook him and said, "Roland, behave yourself."

Dix. What did he do then?

Mack. Rounded on her, and let on again. Wanted to row after the "Leopardess." Calmed down after a bit, and told me to heave to, off Deadman's Point.

Dix. What time was that?

Mack. Half arter eight.

Hob. Quarter to nine, Ben. Don't tell a lie about it.

Mack. I won't, Bill.

Dix. What did you do then?

Mack. Watched the starn light of the "Leopardess." Jest as she was getting out of sight, she 'bout ship, and back she came into Yavercliff bay.

Dix. Yes, and then?

Mack. Little gent bust out again, and shook his fist, and ordered me to row up to her. "Leopardess" anchored across the bay yonder.

Hob. [Pointing out of window.] And there she is to this very moment. There's her riding light, eh Ben?

Mack. There's her riding light, Bill.

Dix. Well, you rowed out to her?

Mack. No, we didn't. Afore we got alongside, the gig put off from her. Little gent spotted the parties what he was after, and give me orders to row after the gig.

Dix. And then, what happened?

Mack. I didn't rightly see. Moon hadn't risen. But afore we got to the pier-head, I heered a splashing, and a shouting, and a screeching. Little gent stands up, and says, "Good heavens! The boat's capsized! She's in the water! Row to them! Row for your life!" Time we got to the pier-head yonder, half Yavercliff was there, lady's maid shrieking, "Leopardess'" men dragged out all safe, gig capsized, Lord knows what beside! I jumped ashore to see what could be done.

Hob. You did, Ben. I give you a hand.

Mack. You did, Bill. Little gent sings out to the

lady's maid, "Where's your mistress?" Lady's maid shrieks out, "She's drownded! She's drownded!" Then we hears a cry for help. Little gent says, "No, there she is! She's alive." Rows off to her like mad in my boat, and finds her hanging on to some moorings out there. [Pointing.] Just as he gets up to her, off she drops into the water, and little gent like a fool jumps in after her, and—well, there you are! Spring tides, powerful strong ebb, and what more could you expect, or want?

Dix. And that's all you know about it?

Mack. No, I know some'ut else.

Dix. [Eagerly.] What?

Mack. [Taking out a wet five-pound note, and an old, dirty, leather purse.] I know little gent gi'e me a five-poun' note. Likewise I know what I mean to do with him, time he's dry.

[Displaying the five-pound note.

Hob. You've come out with flying colours, Ben!

Mack. Middling, Bill. [Puts the note in purse, pats it affectionately, puts it in pocket with a satisfied nod of head.] Good night.

Dix. Mackett, what do you suppose was the cause of the accident?

Mack. [Solemnly.] See this here, sir, lay your life, once you get these here fire-setters aboard——

Dix. Fire-setters?

Mack. Anything might happen.

Dix. [Puzzled.] Fire-setters? Were there fire-setters aboard the gig?

Mack. Two of 'em.

Dix. What are fire-setters?

Mack. Women-folk. [Exit MACKETT, left.

Hob. Well, where are we now, sir?

Dix. [Makes a gesture of perplexity.] Heaven only knows! Why does the lady come down here? Why does she go aboard the "Leopardess"? What has this Stubbs got to do with the lady? [Suddenly.] He can't be her husband?

Hob. He don't look it.

Dix. Or brother?

Hob. There's no family likeness.

Dix. Then why was he in such a devil of a panic when she was drowning?

Hob. It does seem as if we were going to have a regular first-class mystery at last.

Dix. Then again—why is he so anxious to keep it secret who she is?

Hob. Ah! Did you notice how he jumped down my throat when I says, "I'll send my pair-horse fly over to Barrowdown for a doctor." "Doctor?" he says; "Nonsense. The lady has only had a wetting. Some brandy, and she'll be all right." He shied at the bare idea of a doctor.

Dix. Curious!

Hob. Fishy! Fishy, from the word go! But though fishy, will make very tasty newspaper reading.

Dix. Oh, I shall get a good smart half column out of it, in Wednesday's "Englishman."

Hob. "The Yavercliff Mystery." You might almost call it "The Yavercliff Sensation."

Dix. What's the lady's maid like?

Hob. Flustered, and uppish! Unnecessary uppish! Shush!

[Listens, points to staircase door. After a pause the staircase door slowly opens, and FLITTON puts her head out. She is very untidy, with her dress half unbuttoned, and her hair most unattractively arranged for the night.]

Flitton. Landlord—

Hob. Well, miss?

[Winks at DIX, and jerks his thumb towards FLITTON.]

Flitton. [Holding out at arm's length through the slit of the door, a hot-water bottle, with a red flannel covering.] Will you please fill my hot-water bottle?

Hob. [Winking at DIX.] I'm afraid there's no hot water, miss.

Flitton. I must have some. I cannot go to bed with cold feet. [Holding out the bottle.

Hob. [Taking the bottle.] I'm afraid it won't be very hot—

Flitton. Then please boil it. I'll wait. [Throws the bottle out and sharply closes the door. HOBDAY makes pantomimic references to FLITTON and the situation, and exit, right. DIX, left alone, listens, looks at the staircase door, hesitates, at length goes to it, stands above it, taps gently.] Who's there?

Dix. I beg pardon. [Cautiously opening the door.] Won't you come in.

Flitton. Well, I—

Dix. Pray come in and sit down?

[Holding the door a little more widely open.

FLITTON enters slowly and forbiddingly.

Dix. [Places a chair for her very sweetly. She sits down. DIX cautiously glances at her.] You've had a very exciting evening!

Flitton. Oh, don't speak about it!

Dix. Beautiful ship, the "Leopardess!" We were surprised to see you coming back so soon.

Flitton. We only went just for dinner and a sail.

Dix. Did you have a pleasant sail?

Flitton. Very pleasant.

Dix. And all went well till you reached the pier-head? How did the accident happen?

Flitton. Oh, don't ask me.

Dix. You didn't get into the water, did you?

Flitton. No, but I had all the worry of seeing them in, and dreading every moment that somebody would be drowned. I'm trembling all over now.

Dix. You'll be better in the morning.

Flitton. I'm sure I shan't.

Dix. How's your mistress?

Flitton. Oh, she's quite come round.

Dix. She was some time in the water?

Flitton. She's a splendid swimmer.

Dix. Yes, but the shock?

Flitton. Oh, she don't know what nerves are.

Dix. Ah, we poor sufferers from nerves! We get no pity. Well, I'm glad your mistress has recovered. Will you tell her how delighted—by the way, what is your mistress's name?

Re-enter HOBDAY, right, with the hot-water bottle filled, and a claret bottle, labelled "Médoc." He puts the claret bottle on supper-table.

Flitton. Is that hot?

Hob. [Stroking hot-water bottle.] You touch it, that's all!

Flitton. [Touching it.] It's nearly cold!

Hob. [Touching it.] I assure you, miss, it's just on boiling. You couldn't bear it hotter than that, not in July.

Flitton. It's barely warm, man!

Hob. Look here, miss. I've kept a hotel for twenty years. You must allow me to be a judge of hot water!

Flitton. I cannot go to bed with that.

Hob. Well, miss, then you must go to bed without it!

Flitton. I shall never sleep with my cold feet.

Hob. Wrap 'em up in something nice and comforting.

[Turns away from her and goes to supper-table with claret.

Flitton. If you don't give me some hot water, man —Oh, I feel my nerves will give way.

Hob. I'm sorry, miss, but that's all the hot water you can have to-night.

Flitton. Very well! You'll see! I'll tell her ladyship in the morning!

[Exit at staircase with hot-water bottle.

Dix. Her ladyship! Her ladyship! Whew! Hobday!

Hob. [Triumphantly.] Ah! I told you we'd got a first-class mystery.

Dix. Her ladyship! But who the plague is Stubbs?

[*Sits down reflectively.*

Hob. Mark my words, Stubbs is somebody.

[*Takes knife and begins to scrape the Médoc label off the bottle.*

Dix. [Musing.] Special train to Yavercliff! Five-pound note to Mackett! [Watching HOBDAY.] Hobday, that's infernally bad claret of yours, that Médoc!

Hob. Think so, sir?

Dix. Filthy stuff!

Hob. It's good enough for Yavercliff. Too good, in fact!

Dix. If I were manager of this hotel I should give a good sound *vin ordinaire* for two shillings a bottle.

Hob. [Shakes his head and smiles at DIX'S innocence.] Would you, sir? Look here. You're a newspaper gentleman, and you know what suits your customers—jealousy stabbing cases, and such like. I'm a hotel proprietor, and I know what suits my customers. If I was to give 'em Château Margaux they wouldn't know it, and I should only break my heart!

Dix. [Still musing.] Husband? [Shakes his head.] Brother? [Shakes his head.] Lover? [Shakes his head.]

Hob. Cousin perhaps. Or otherwise, old friend of the family.

Dix. Hobday, you've taken the Médoc label off.

Hob. Do let me know what's good for him. [Winks cunningly at DIX, and places bottle triumphantly on the supper-table.] There you are. There's your supper waiting for you, Mr. Roland Stubbs!

Dix. Roland Stubbs! Roland—I seem to remember a Roland Stubbs somewhere. [Snapping his knuckles to summon a recollection. Slaps his knee.] Yes! Piccadilly! The boot shop!

Hob. Boot shop?

Dix. By Jove, he's a shoemaker!

Hob. [Triumphantly.] There, sir! I told you Stubbs was somebody!

Dix. But who's her ladyship? Who's the unknown fair?

Hob. You're on the right scent, sir. Follow up that clue and you'll land yourself somewhere.

Dix. [Walking about excitedly, takes out his notebook, talks to himself.] The hero shoemaker! Makes gallant and desperate attempts to save her unknown ladyship! At length, worn and weary, drags her swooning to the pier, amidst the cheers of the admiring populace—— [Turns to HOBDAY.] Yes, Hobday, you're right! It's just the thing to tickle the British public this slack holiday time!

Hob. It knocks spots off the jealousy stabbing case, in my judgment.

Dix. Shush!

[Listens, points to staircase. A pause. Footsteps heard.]

Enter FLORA in the same dress as in the previous Act.

She has a pillow, blanket and rug in her arms, which she arranges on the sofa during the following scene.

Dix. I beg pardon for intruding. I looked in to see if I could offer any help.

Flora. No, thank you.

[She is arranging STUBBS'S bed on the sofa.]

Dix. The lady has quite recovered, I hope?

Flora. Quite, thank you.

Dix. Good night.

Flora. Good night.

Dix. Good night, Hobday.

Hob. Good night, sir. [Exit DIX, right.]

Flora. [Coming to supper-table.] There's nothing else you can give my brother, I suppose?

Hob. Nice cold ham and pickles. What could anybody want more?

Flora. What wine is that?

Hob. That's a special vintage of Château Margaux.

Flora. He's fond of good claret.

Hob. Then he'll find himself at home here.

Flora. Draw the cork, please.

Hob. I will, miss. [Draws the cork reverently.]

Flora. You haven't laid a serviette!

Hob. In general, miss, we find the Yavercliff visitors don't require serviettes, except sometimes at dinner. Is there anything else, miss?

Flora. No, thank you.

Hob. Then I'll say good night. And what a night it has been for all of us! But let us hope it will end happy for all the parties concerned, whatever their rank and station.

Flora. [Sharply.] What do you mean?

Hob. Nothing. My way of putting it, miss, and doing my best to make everybody happy and comfortable. Good night, miss.

Flora. Good night. [She watches him off, and then goes to staircase door, and calls gently up it.] Roland!

After a moment, enter STUBBS at staircase, in an old long ulster of HOBDAY'S, reaching to his feet.

Stubbs. [Looking round.] Have you got rid of the newspaper man?

Flora. Yes. How do you feel now?

Stubbs. [Opening the overcoat, and discovering a waistcoat and trousers of HOBDAY'S much too large for him.] First-rate. Except for the rig-out, first-rate, more than first-rate!

Flora. There isn't much for your supper.

Stubbs. Supper? I held her up in the water for ten minutes! Supper?! I have supped! I shall never need to taste of mortal supper again! I'm jolly hungry, though. What is there? [Coming up to table.]

Flora. Cold ham. Cheese. Pickles.

Stubbs. [Discontented.] Hm—cold ham—

Flora. And a bottle of Château Margaux.

Stubbs. Château Margaux! Well, we can pull through on that. Sit down, old girl!

Flora. I had my dinner upstairs.

Stubbs. Upstairs?

Flora. Lady Hermione didn't want the cold chicken they brought up for her, so I had it.

Stubbs. [Flaming out.] What? You robbed her of that miserable portion of cold chicken! After all the agony and exhaustion she had gone through!

Flora. She couldn't eat it.

Stubbs. You ought to have coaxed her!

Flora. She'd had one dinner on the yacht.

Stubbs. Never mind. She must have needed another by this time. If she falls ill now, it will be entirely owing to your want of common consideration for her sufferings.

Flora. Want of common consideration?

Stubbs. What else was it? [Sits down discouraged.

Flora. Old man, I'm very sorry— [Comes to him.

Stubbs. There! It's done now. It can't be helped! [Moves his chair moodily to the table, and begins carving.] If you had only waited and denied yourself, you might have had supper with me, and given me your sisterly sympathy and advice while I—

Flora. I can do that now.

Stubbs. No, I must be alone and think over what's happened. [Suddenly flaming into ecstasy.] I say, old girl! If I live for ten thousand years, I shall never have another night like this!

Flora. Well, I hope I shan't!

Stubbs. [Damped and discouraged, drops the carving-knife with a rattle.] You go to bed like a good girl, will you?

Flora. What about that newspaper man?

Stubbs. I'm sure he's up to something. There's no name on Lady Hermione's luggage?

Flora. No. She sent most of it on to her sister's, and only brought her dressing-case and one old trunk here. And her initials were rubbed off the trunk.

Stubbs. You've been careful not to mention her name?

Flora. Oh, yes.

Stubbs. Good. [Feels in his pocket.] I forgot—

[Suddenly rushes to staircase door.]

Flora. What's the matter?

Stubbs. I've left it upstairs.

[Exit hurriedly at staircase door.]

Flora. What?

[Listens at stairs, then goes up to door, opens it, looks out, listens, closes door.]

Re-enter STUBBS at staircase door with the handkerchief he had stolen from LADY HERMIONE in the first Act.

Flora. [Closing the door.] What had you left upstairs?

Stubbs. This handkerchief.

Flora. Hers?

Stubbs. Yes. I stole it in the shop this morning—yesterday morning. What is to-day? I don't know where or when we are. You leave me alone, will you?

Flora. Good night, old man. [Kissing him.] I hope you'll sleep well.

Stubbs. Sleep?! Sleep?! It's commonsense, commonplace grovellers like you that want sleep! Sleep? I couldn't sleep a wink to-night, not if a little angel were to come down specially and scatter rose-leaves all over me. Flo, if ever I forget this immortal night, may I—

[FLORA claps her hand over his mouth, forces him into chair, resolutely turns his face to the supper.]

Flora. Yes! You have some supper, old man. You'll feel better then. [Yawns.] Good night.

Stubbs. Good night, old girl! [Kisses her, and pats her cheek.] You aren't a bad sort, after all. If you'd only rise into rapture sometimes, if you'd only—[FLORA again claps her hand over his mouth, points him to his supper, and exit at staircase].

[STUBBS, alone, pulls out LADY HERMIONE'S handkerchief, kisses it, places it on the water decanter beside him, then begins to carve the ham, addressing the handkerchief, gesticulating and pointing his remarks with the carving knife and fork.]

Stubbs. Yes! Ten minutes of such happiness as never yet fell to the lot of mortal man! She and I swimming together for our very lives! Was it ten minutes? Or was it only two or three? Or was it two or three hours? I'm hanged if I know! And the lights dancing on the shore! And all the folk shouting and screaming! And the red light on the pier-head seemed a hundred miles away! [Addressing the handkerchief.] And once I thought she'd gone! If I'd missed her! If I'd lost her! Well, I'd have gone down with her! They'd have found us together! [Suddenly.] Perhaps they'd have buried us together in that queer little churchyard we came by. No, they'd have taken her to the family vault at Culverlands, while I—I— [Sighs deeply, looks closely at the pickle bottle.] Pickled walnuts! [Savagely.] Why will people pickle walnuts while there's anything else left on earth to pickle? They'd have buried me—where? Well, I didn't let her go down! [Talking to the handkerchief.] No sea could have sunk me then! I could no more have let her go to the bottom than I can eat these black bullets! And when I got her to the pier-head—Ah! Yes, I did it! Pickles, or no pickles, I got her ashore! Walnuts, or no walnuts, she's safe! She's sleeping comfortably upstairs, instead of sleeping cold and stiff out there on a bed of seaweed! Yes, she's safe! [Seizing the bottle of claret by the neck and addressing it.] Doesn't

that fire you up afresh, old Château Margaux? Doesn't that pour new life into your blood, eh? Well then, old boy, pour a little new life into mine!

[*He is pouring out a glass of wine when the staircase door opens slowly and cautiously, and LADY HERMIONE appears at it in a very beautiful dressing-gown.*

Stubbs. [Overwhelmed, speechless, puts down the glass on the table.] My lady!

Lady H. Shush! You're quite alone?

Stubbs. Yes, my lady.

[*She points to the window curtains; STUBBS goes up to draw curtains. LADY HERMIONE says "Shush!" he draws them over the windows.*

Lady H. Just see that nobody is about!

[*STUBBS goes to door, left, opens it, looks out, closes it.*

Stubbs. It's all right, my lady.

Lady H. That newspaper man isn't about?

Stubbs. No, my lady. Everybody's gone to bed.

Lady H. [Coming up to him, holding out both her hands, taking his.] I want to thank you for what you've done to-night. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! With all my heart, thank you! A thousand times!

Stubbs. My lady, don't please, and—[looking down at HOBDAY'S clothes, much ashamed] my lady, would you allow me to go and put on my own clothes?

Lady H. But they're wet.

Stubbs. I can't talk to you in these clothes.

Lady H. Why?

Stubbs. I'm such an object.

Lady H. Oh. That doesn't matter in the least.

Stubbs. No, I suppose it doesn't matter what I look like!

Lady H. It doesn't matter what any man looks like, so long as he is a man.

Stubbs. Well, my lady, I felt very much like a man

when we got to the pier-head to-night. Not that I wish to claim— [Looking at her with great admiration.] You're a splendid swimmer, my lady!

Lady H. And so are you, Mr. Stubbs.

Stubbs. I thought once you were failing.

Lady H. Yes, I lost my nerve, or I shouldn't have needed your help.

Stubbs. I'm glad you lost your nerve, my lady.

Lady H. Yes, well I've got it back completely. Now I want to consult you.

Stubbs. [Embarrassed.] My lady, if you'd allow me to change, I wouldn't be a moment.

Lady H. Please sit down, and don't trouble about your personal appearance. It's we poor creatures who are obliged to waste our lives in that nonsense. You haven't had any dinner yet.

Stubbs. My lady, that doesn't matter in the least.

Lady H. Now. Oblige me by sitting down and eating.

Stubbs. My lady—I— [Trembling all over, embarrassed.] My lady, I'd rather wait.

Lady H. Nonsense; try!

Stubbs. Well, I— [Catches her eye.] My lady, I can't eat while you're looking on at me—

Lady H. Oh, very well. I won't look on. I'll join you.

Stubbs. My lady! If you will only deign—to grace—my humble—board—

Lady H. I will.

Stubbs. [Overwhelmed.] Oh, my lady!

Lady H. I feel quite hungry. I couldn't eat when they sent up the cold chicken. [Drawing chair up to table.] What is there? Ham? I'll take a little, please!

Stubbs. [Carving.] I'm afraid it's getting rather low, my lady.

Lady H. Never mind. What's in that bottle?

Stubbs. Pickled walnuts.

Lady H. Pickled walnuts! I adore pickled walnuts. Don't you?

Stubbs. They're delicious! And I'm proud to say I can offer you a glass of really good wine.

Lady H. Claret?

Stubbs. [Proudly.] Château Margaux, my lady.

Lady H. Château Margaux?! We shall have a splendid supper. Now, please help yourself, because I've had one dinner already.

Stubbs. [Upset.] On the "Leopardess," my lady?

Lady H. Yes. It was an old promise of mine to dine with Mr. Dellow and see over the "Leopardess."

Stubbs. My lady, I hope you aren't angry with me for rowing after the "Leopardess"?

Lady H. Rowing after the "Leopardess"?

Stubbs. You didn't see me?

Lady H. No. Mr. Dellow said you came to Yavercliff to spy upon us. I am sure that isn't so?

Stubbs. No, my lady, not to spy—I only meant to watch over you.

Lady H. Watch over me?

Stubbs. I found out he was going to sail away to France without your knowing. Wasn't he?

Lady H. Perhaps he was. But I didn't wish to go, and I made that very clear. So the moment dinner was over we headed back for Yavercliff. There's really no need for you to watch over me, Mr. Stubbs.

Stubbs. My lady, I beg your pardon. [Pause.] Can I give you a glass of Château Margaux? [He has poured her out a glass, and gives it to her. She tastes. He pours out one for himself.] I hope it's to your liking, my lady?

Lady H. Very good, indeed. [STUBBS tastes his with the air of a connoisseur, shows great disgust, puts his glass down in despair.] What's the matter?

Stubbs. I feel I shall murder that landlord in the morning!

Lady H. Why?

Stubbs. I do know a good calfskin, and I do know

a good glass of claret. [*Greatly distressed.*] My lady, to think on an occasion like this I've nothing better to offer you than cold, stringy ham! And a glass of such rubbish as that!

Lady H. Oh, I'm enjoying my supper immensely. I never enjoyed a supper more!

Stubbs. My lady! Are you sure? A small portion more ham, my lady?

Lady H. No, thank you.

Stubbs. Can't I tempt you with a very small portion?

Lady H. Well, a very small portion, then. And let me see you enjoy your supper.

Stubbs. You shall, my lady.

Lady H. About this newspaper man? You're sure he doesn't know who I am?

Stubbs. Quite sure, my lady. He kept on trying to fish your name out of me.

Lady H. It was lucky my initials had got rubbed off that old trunk.

Stubbs. Yes.

Lady H. It would be rather terrible if my name were to come out in connection with the affair. So I shall have to trust to your kindness to keep me out of it. Do you think you can?

Stubbs. You lay your life I can, my lady.

Lady H. What had we better do?

Stubbs. You and your maid must have breakfast in your room, creep out of that door, and get off by the first train. My sister must take your luggage up to town with her, and send it on from there to Lady Mildred's.

Lady H. Yes, that's a good plan. Your sister won't mind?

Stubbs. She'll be delighted, my lady. She's a good sort, though a little commonplace.

Lady H. She seems full of good sense and very cheerful.

Stubbs. Ye-es—ye-es—but she's hopelessly commonplace to live with.

Lady H. Is she?

Stubbs She doesn't spur me on to do great things.

Lady H. You haven't done badly, Mr. Stubbs.

Stubbs. Oh, I'm not grumbling. I've done very well in soft kid. Of course it has been a great boon to me to have your ladyship for an ideal, and to live up to it! It's such a grand thing to have an ideal. I hope your ladyship will pardon me for using you for an ideal?

Lady H. Oh yes. It seems quite an honorary position. I rather like it. But I should think you'd find your sister more useful.

Stubbs. No, my lady. She doesn't inspire me. I often feel that mine is comparatively a wasted life.

Lady H. Oh, don't say that!

Stubbs. Yes, comparatively. I feel that, in order to do great things, a man needs his ideal always at hand, always at his elbow.

Lady H. I'm afraid if our ideals were always at our elbow, they'd soon get their paint rubbed off!

Stubbs. If I may be excused, hasn't your ladyship ever felt the need of a congenial ideal?

Lady H. Oh, most schoolgirls get little ailments of that sort, but as our constitution gets settled we grow out of them. [STUBBS looks downcast.] I'm afraid I've shocked you, Mr. Stubbs?

Stubbs. Oh, my lady, I've no right to talk to your ladyship as I've been doing, but I do think if your ladyship would only try to get an ideal in life—

Lady H. Perhaps I have one already, Mr. Stubbs! —in some out-of-the-way dusty corner. I must turn him out, and paint him up again. [Rising.] It's very late, and we must try to get a little sleep.

[*A tap at the window behind the curtains.*

She shows a little fright. It is followed by a knock at the door at back, which is then slowly opened, and DELLOW looks in. STUBBS shows defiance; LADY HERMIONE shows a little disdain.

Lady H. Mr. Dellow!

Del. I beg pardon. Just a moment, Stubbs. Don't put yourself out, Lady Hermione. My man brought me word to the "Leopardess" about the accident. They said you were quite safe, but I didn't feel quite happy about you, so I came ashore to see for myself. I've been waiting about. I didn't quite like to come in after the way you dropped down on me to-night. I hope you've forgiven me?

Lady H. Oh yes, and I mean to forget you as quickly as I can.

Del. You're all right? None the worse for the wetting?

Lady H. Not at all. Good night.

Del. I thought I'd let you know I'm putting off to the West coast of Scotland for a couple of months.

Lady H. Thank you. I shall not be coming that way.

Del. So this is good-bye.

Lady H. Good-bye.

Del. I say, you aren't angry with me still?

Lady H. Angry? No, but you ought to have known better. Don't be so foolish again.

Del. I won't. But you did egg me on, you know. And I told you I'd had just enough of it. Well, good-bye. Good-bye, little Stubbs. Decent, plucky little beggar, aren't you, Stubbs? And a jolly good shoemaker! Ta-ta, little Stubbs. Good-bye, Lady Hermione. It's your own fault, you know. You did egg me on.

[Exit at back. STUBBS, who has stood defiant throughout, closes the door after him. LADY HERMIONE stands looking down, a little ashamed. STUBBS also stands distressed.

Lady H. [At length.] Well, good night again.

[Holding out her hand.

Stubbs. Lady Hermione—

Lady H. Well? What is it?

Stubbs. No, I've no right to speak to you—

Lady H. Yes. Say what you were going to say.

Stubbs. I don't know your ways—you upper classes all seem to me so free and easy, and you take everything as a matter of course—you never seem to feel anything, or to believe in anything—

Lady H. Oh, we can feel, and we can believe.

Stubbs. Well, this man Dellow—

Lady H. Go on. Speak out quite plainly.

Stubbs. Well, you either care for him, or you don't care for him. If you do care for him, it seems a pity, because he's such a—such a—

Lady H. You can say the word.

Stubbs. No. I should be sorry to call a friend of yours a—

Lady H. He isn't a friend of mine—the man is nothing to me.

Stubbs. Well then, isn't it a greater pity still to come down here secretly for a man you don't care about? And then to give him the chance of saying you egged him on! You'll forgive my speaking like this?

Lady H. Yes. I've been very foolish. I daresay I appear more foolish than I have really been. I don't suppose any man can really understand how foolish a woman may be through the merest curiosity. Curiosity is often to us what passion is to you. There! I mustn't give away any more secrets. Thank you for speaking out as you have done. I shall never do a foolish thing like this again. Thank you for saving me.

Stubbs. Thank you for letting me save you.

Lady H. [Going off.] You think we shall be able to escape from this dreadful newspaper man in the morning?

Stubbs. Yes. I've been looking up the Bradshaw. The first train out from Yavercliff is 8.30.

Lady H. That's rather late, isn't it?

Stubbs. There's one from Barrowdown at 5.30, but that's six miles away.

Lady H. Couldn't I drive there?

Stubbs. I'm afraid not, at that time in the morning. But I'll look round very early and see what can be done. You'll be ready to get up whatever time I call you?

Lady H. Yes. I put myself entirely in your hands. But whatever happens, my name must be kept out of it. That man mustn't get to know who I am.

Stubbs. He shan't, my lady. Trust to me.

Lady. H. I do. I'm afraid you're going to have a very uncomfortable night.

Stubbs. My lady, I'm going to have the happiest night I have ever spent.

Lady H. Good night.

Stubbs. Good night.

[Exit LADY HERMIONE at staircase. STUBBS
closes the door after her, draws open the
curtains, looks out.]

Stubbs. So you're making off, Madame Leopardess, are you? [Shaking his fist at her.] That's right, turn your tail, you hussy, and never show yourself on our shore again! [Comes away from window, again seats himself at supper-table, but in LADY HERMIONE'S late place, taking up her glass.] I feel so happy, I could even make believe you were Château Margaux.

[He is about to drink when there is a little tap at door right, and DIX in an old dressing-gown, looks in. STUBBS jumps up startled.]

Dix. [Entering.] Don't disturb yourself, Mr. Stubbs! Excuse my coming in at this ungodly hour—— [Advancing to STUBBS.] The fact is, I couldn't sleep, and seeing your light under the door——

Stubbs. May I ask——?

Dix. Only just called to congratulate you and to shake hands—if I may be allowed the honour?

[Holding out hand. STUBBS gives his hand rather reluctantly. DIX shakes it very warmly.]

Dix. You're really a splendid fellow.

Stubbs. Oh no.

Dix. Oh yes. That was a magnificent feat of daring and by Wednesday morning all England shall ring with it!

Stubbs. Eh?

Dix. I'm going to give you the most splendid advertisement that any man has ever had.

Stubbs. Thank you. I'd rather you didn't.

Dix. What?

Stubbs. I really did nothing. The lady was a wonderful swimmer. We both got a little wetting—that's all.

Dix. Ah! You're like all true heroes! You're trying to belittle your own achievements. But I'm going to save you from your own false modesty.

Stubbs. No. Please don't mention it in the newspapers.

Dix. Oh, I must. You're going to be known for the true hero you are.

Stubbs. Really, Mr.—

Dix. Dix.

Stubbs. Mr. Dix, I'm not a hero. I don't want to be a hero. And I really must decline to be made into one.

Dix. My dear Mr. Stubbs, even if I wished, I couldn't pass this matter over. It can't be kept out of the Press.

Stubbs. Are you sure?

Dix. Quite. It's already public property. Now, wouldn't it be better for you to give me your own version of the whole affair?

Stubbs. Perhaps it would.

Dix. I'm going off by the eight-thirty in the morning.

Stubbs. Then there won't be time.

Dix. I can stay if necessary. Or I could call on you in Piccadilly.

Stubbs. You know my address?

Dix. Roland Stubbs is a very well-known name—
Stubbs. [Gasps.] Oh!

Dix. I don't know whether you are aware of it, Mr. Stubbs, but this whole affair has rather a mysterious aspect.

Stubbs. How?

Dix. For instance, who's the lady?

Stubbs. I saw a lady struggling in the water. I didn't wait to ask her name.

Dix. But I daresay you've taken the trouble to ask it since. [STUBBS doesn't reply.] I don't want to press you unfairly, but you'd better give me the lady's name? [STUBBS is silent.] I may tell you that in the interests of the public and my paper I'm determined to find out.

Stubbs. And then make it public?

Dix. Not necessarily.

Stubbs. Would you promise not to make it public?

Dix. I must use my own judgement. Hadn't you better tell me yourself?

Stubbs. I mustn't give away a lady's confidence without her permission, must I?

Dix. Certainly not.

Stubbs. I should like to consult her first.

Dix. By all means.

[FLORA'S voice heard on the stair.

Flora. Roland, we can hear voices, and we cannot possibly get to sleep.

Dix. I'm a brute to keep people awake at this hour. [Calling to FLORA.] My dear lady, ten thousand pardons. Mr. Stubbs has a simple question to ask of—of— [Turns to STUBBS.] Perhaps you'll just see the lady, and fix an appointment for to-morrow morning.

Stubbs. Very well. All right, Flo. [To DIX.] I won't be a moment.

[Exit STUBBS at staircase. DIX stands in thought, is struck with an idea, takes out

his note-book, seats himself at table, hurriedly writes in it.

STUBBS *re-enters at staircase door.*

Dix. Well?

Stubbs. The lady says she's very tired to-night. Could you let it all wait over till the morning?

Dix. Certainly. What time?

Stubbs. Eight o'clock.

Dix. Eight o'clock. Where?

Stubbs. In this room.

Dix. I'll be here to the moment. You do see how necessary it is for you to give me all particulars, don't you?

Stubbs. Oh yes. Oh yes. [Looking at table.] I hadn't quite finished my supper——

Dix. Ten thousand pardons for intruding. Good night.

Stubbs. Good night.

[Seating himself at supper-table.]

Dix. You're a real hero. [Holding out hand.]

Stubbs. No! No!

Dix. [Wringing STUBBS' hand.] Yes! Yes! You'll never know how great a hero you are till you see it in the papers. Good-night.

[Exit door, right. STUBBS makes a deprecating gesture to DIX as he goes off. As soon as DIX has gone, STUBBS rises, listens carefully, creeps on tiptoe to door, right, listens carefully, turns the key quite noiselessly, locks the door, goes to table where his hat is lying, takes it up, listens, creeps up to lamp, turns it off, creeps up to staircase door, opens it noiselessly, listens and waits a moment. LADY HERMIONE enters in hat and outdoor dress. He signs silence. They go noiselessly to outer door.

He opens it. They go out, and he closes it behind them. They pass the window as the first faint streaks of dawn appear in the sky.

CURTAIN.

Four days pass between Acts III. and IV.



ACT IV.

SCENE: *The Garden room at Culverlands, SIR ARTHUR'S country seat. A bright, elegantly furnished little room in an English country house. Along the back runs a veranda which is approached by two sets of glass doors, right and left respectively. The glass doors are thrown open and show the veranda shut in, with trellis, which is festooned with climbing plants and flowers. The foliage is very thick, and almost screens the veranda from the garden, which is vaguely seen beyond in the moonlight. A large door, right, opens upon the drawing-room which is brilliantly lighted. A smaller door down left leads out into a passage. A fire-place up stage, left. A small writing-table below door, left. Another small table towards the centre of the room.*

The TIME is after dinner, about ten on the following Saturday. As curtain rises a buzz of talk interspersed with bursts of laughter is heard faintly through the drawing-room door.

Discover FLORA in outdoor dress seated as if waiting. Enter BALLARD, the butler, from drawing-room, closing the door after him. Each time the drawing-room door is opened, the buzz of laughter and talk becomes very distinct and animated.

Ballard.

ER ladyship will be here in a moment.

Flora. You gave her the letter?

Bal. Yes, here is her ladyship.

LADY HERMIONE *enters from drawing-room. She is rather agitated, and looks anxiously behind her as she enters.* FLORA *rises.*

Lady H. Ballard, please tell Lady Mildred I wish to speak to her here.

Bal. Yes, my lady.

[Exit BALLARD into drawing-room. LADY HERMIONE watches him off, and then turns to FLORA who has remained standing.]

Lady H. Good evening. [Offers hand.]

Flora. Good evening, my lady. You've read my brother's letter?

Lady H. [Taking a letter from pocket.] Then this Mr. Dix is staying at Chidhurst?

Flora. Yes, my lady. I caught sight of him in the gateway of the Angel and Roland's afraid he has somehow got some clue that you are the—

Lady H. The unknown fair? But how is that possible? We got right away from Yavercliff, and when your brother left me I waited quietly at Barrowdown station and took the train. Nobody noticed me, I feel sure.

Flora. You arrived safely at Rerebrook, my lady?

Lady H. Oh yes. I got in to lunch, and Flitton came down with the luggage for dinner. Thank you and Mr. Stubbs for managing it so well. [Suddenly.] Perhaps Mr. Dix saw Flitton and you with the luggage.

Flora. No. When my brother got back from

Barrowdown, he hired the trap and paid the bill, and we all drove off before Mr. Dix was up. And when we got to London, Flitton disappeared instantly with your luggage.

Lady H. Mr. Dix has called several times at Piccadilly since?

Flora. Yes, but we took care not to be at home.

Lady H. Perhaps he has merely followed you down here, and doesn't suspect that I am the—the unknown fair?

Flora. Yes, perhaps, my lady.

Lady H. You're down for the week-end, I suppose?

Flora. Yes, my lady.

Lady H. Have you seen the evening papers?

Flora. Yes.

Lady H. Is there much about the Yavercliff mystery?

Flora. There are several little articles and paragraphs.

Lady H. And I thought I'd got clear!

Flora. I'm so sorry, my lady.

Lady H. Thank you. It's my own fault; that's some comfort. No, that only makes it harder to bear.

Flora. Have you any message for my brother, my lady?

Lady H. [Shaking hands.] Thank him very much. Tell him I shall never forget his kindness on our morning walk along the cliffs to Barrowdown.

Enter BALLARD from drawing-room. Buzz of talk and bursts of laughter come intermittently from drawing-room all through this scene.

Flora. [Going.] Good night, my lady.

Lady H. Good night. Ballard, show this lady out.

[*Exit FLORA, left, followed by BALLARD.*

LADY MILDRED has followed BALLARD from drawing-room.

Lady H. [Turns to MILLY.] Oh, Milly!

Lady M. What's the matter, dear?

Lady H. Nothing. [A loud burst of laughter. LADY HERMIONE goes to drawing-room door and looks off.] What is Tom telling them in the corner there?

Lady M. He has got on to the Yavercliff mystery again.

Lady H. He does nothing but chatter about that affair.

Lady M. Well, it's awfully amusing, isn't it? Lady Bodicote was saying——

Lady H. Lady Bodicote is worse than Tom. [Another burst of laughter. LADY HERMIONE looks off.] Can't you stop Tom?

Lady M. [Startled.] Hermione, why——? [Looks at her. LADY HERMIONE shows shame. LADY MILDRED puts her hand affectionately on LADY HERMIONE'S.] Why didn't you tell me it was you?

Lady H. Oh, it's too hateful to speak about!

Lady M. Arthur doesn't suspect——?

Lady H. Yes, I'm afraid he does. Didn't you notice how he was watching Tom?

Lady M. Hermione, you haven't been—foolish?

Lady H. Foolish? Yes. [Suddenly.] What do you mean? No, not so foolish as that, but foolish enough!

Lady M. Wouldn't it be better to tell Arthur?

Lady H. I can't now.

Lady M. Why not?

Lady H. When it first came out in the papers, he said, "Hermione, I needn't ask if you are this unknown fair?" I hadn't the courage to tell the truth. Like a donkey, I drew myself up indignantly and said, "How can you ask me such a question?"

Lady M. What did he say?

Lady H. Poor old boy! He kissed me in the nicest way, and said, "I trust you entirely." And now I'm sure he begins to suspect me again. Oh, it's horrible!

[She sits down in despair.]

Lady M. [Very sympathetic.] Poor old girl! What can I do?

Lady H. Keep Tom's mouth shut!

Lady M. I'll try. [Opens the door a little, and looks off.] But I'm afraid he's had an extra glass of Arthur's port. [A little burst of laughter.] He was bubbling over all through dinner.

Lady H. [Looks off into drawing-room; a loud burst of laughter.] Yes, and he's bubbling over still.

Lady M. Shall I tell him in confidence that you are the unknown fair?

Lady H. [Alarmed.] Not for worlds! He'd bubble over with that to somebody.

Lady M. I'm afraid he would.

MRS. TREVISS enters from drawing-room.

Mrs. T. Oh, Hermione—— [Stops, seeing LADY MILDRED.] I thought you were alone. [Going off.

Lady H. Don't go, Harriet. I've told Milly that I'm "the unknown fair."

Mrs. T. My poor dear, what a dreadful mess you're in! It's really quite tragic for you.

Lady H. Yes, quite tragic for me! And quite comic for everybody else!

Mrs. T. I really feel that I'm to blame.

Lady H. How?

Mrs. T. It was I who persuaded you to go down to Fido. You got my wire on the "Leopardess"?

Lady H. Oh, yes.

Mrs. T. I was awfully sorry I couldn't come, but I had to go to my poor brother Jack. Still, I should never forgive myself if I thought——

Lady H. My dear Harriet, you don't suppose I'd any other motive for going, except my silly, senseless, woman's curiosity? And I'm very well punished!

Mrs. T. Well, dear, after all you aren't so badly off as poor Lady Thornbury!

Lady H. What?! She's really tragic! She's a deeply-injured heroine, while I—I'm going to be simply and utterly ridiculous!

Mrs. T. Well, dear, why not take that view of it, and laugh at it yourself?

Lady H. Oh, I would! It's a very poor nature that can't enjoy a joke because it tells against oneself. And I could laugh at this as much as anybody—if it weren't for Arthur. Poor old Arthur! Arthur and I are going to have a very bad time when this all comes out! He'll never forgive me!

Mrs. T. But you say he has nothing to forgive?

Lady H. That doesn't matter! He won't forgive it all the same! Oh, I wish I hadn't been so idiotically innocent when he asked me!

[*Another burst of laughter from drawing-room.* LADY MILDRED *peeps out at door.*

Lady H. What are they doing now?

Lady M. Tom is reading the paper to Lady Bodicote. She's chuckling over it!

Lady H. Why do I ask that dreadful old woman to my week-end parties? Nobody likes her, and I hate her! [Furiously.] I hate her! And yet I always ask her! And she always comes!

Lady M. [At door.] Shush! Arthur!

[*They compose themselves.*

SIR ARTHUR enters from drawing-room.

Sir A. Hermione, Miss Pierpoint is going to give us a song, just to get the din of this Yavercliff mystery out of our ears!

Lady H. That will be a relief.

[*She is going towards drawing-room door, but meets SIR THOMAS STARBUCK, who enters. He is a clean-shaven, merry-eyed, rosy-jowled, nearly bald imp of forty-five; chattering, irresponsible, good-natured,*

with obvious signs of having dined too well. He has three evening papers in his hand, which he drops on a chair in the course of the scene.

Sir T. [Very jovial.] Hermione, I've just had the most glorious inspiration.

Lady H. [Conscious that SIR ARTHUR is watching her.] About what?

Sir T. About Stubbs!

Lady M. Tom, you've got Stubbs on the brain!

Sir T. Well, you and Hermione have got Stubbs on the toes! And in a few weeks' time every lady now staying here will have Stubbs on the toes! Ha! Ha! Stubbs on the toes!

Lady M. What do you mean?

Sir T. I've just heard Stubbs has a bungalow about a mile from here. Then it flashed across me! Real stroke of genius!

Lady M. What?

Sir T. Render homage to our shoemaker hero! At the same time do him a good turn in his business. At the same time get out of him who the "unknown fair" really is. So I proposed—

Lady M. Something consummately foolish!

Sir T. No! Something consummately—consummate! Something equally honouring to Stubbs and to myself! I proposed all the ladies now staying here should recognize Stubbs' heroic conduct by ordering a pair of boots from Stubbs. The ladies all agreed—to a man! God bless 'em! So I sent William with a polite little note to Stubbs, asking him kindly to drop in this evening, bring his measures with him. Gorgeous idea, eh?! Gorgeous—Gorgeous!

Lady M. Tom, you've had too much wine!

Sir T. No, I have had just enough to render me capable of doing justice, and more than justice, to Stubbs' heroic conduct, and all the ladies here are waiting to recognize Stubbs' heroic conduct by giving Stubbs a leg up—Ha! Ha!

Lady M. Tom, you are quite outrageous!

Sir T. Figuratively speaking, giving Stubbs a leg up in his business. Arthur, I hope I have not taken a liberty in asking Stubbs—

Sir A. Oh no! [Watching LADY HERMIONE.] It will be very interesting to hear what Mr. Stubbs has to say about his adventure, eh, Hermione?

Lady H. Oh, very interesting.

Sir T. Just what I thought! Once Stubbs is here, I thought, Stubbs doesn't budge till we know all about the "unknown fair."

Lady M. Miss Pierpoint is just going to sing. Come along! [Taking his arm and leading him off.]

Sir T. [Turning to MRS. TREVISS.] Mrs. Treviss, you will fall in with the other ladies and give Stubbs—

Mrs. T. Certainly, whatever the others do.

Sir T. Give Stubbs—a l—

Lady M. Tom! You are positively indelicate!

Sir T. I maintain there is nothing indelicate in giving Stubbs [*she frowns severely*] an order for a pair of boots!

[LADY MILDRED takes him off into drawing-room. MRS. TREVISS follows. BALLARD enters door left, bringing a letter on tray to SIR ARTHUR. A lady's voice is heard off, beginning to sing.]

Bal. A gentleman called, Sir Arthur, just before dinner. I said you were engaged, so he left that card and letter.

Sir A. [Taking letter and card, looking at card.] Mr. Harvey Dix.

[LADY HERMIONE shows alarm. SIR ARTHUR opens and reads the letter.]

Bal. He said he'd call again after dinner.

Sir A. Very well. I'll see him here.

Bal. Yes, Sir Arthur. [Exit BALLARD, left.]

Lady H. Who is Mr. Harvey Dix?

Sir A. He's Searchlight of "The Englishman."

Lady H. Oh! Mr. Stubbs's godfather in the Yavercliff mystery.

Sir A. Yes. [Watching her.] He wants a few particulars about the Roman bath.

Lady H. What an inquisitive person!

Sir A. [Going into drawing-room.] Aren't you coming to hear Miss Pierpoint?

[Exit into drawing-room. LADY HERMIONE watches him off, closes door, then eagerly seizes the evening papers which SIR THOMAS STARBUCK had left on a chair.

Lady H. [Reads.] "The rumblings of war and the clamours of angry, hungry politicians for a general election have at length subsided, and we are left face to face with the only question of vital interest to the country at large, 'Who was "the unknown fair" of Yavercliff?'" [She dashes the paper angrily away, and takes up the other, reads.] "In the name of all that is dignified and of good repute in English journalism, we must protest against this indecent prying into the private business of private persons." Quite right! [Reading.] "Doubtless the heroine of this trumpery scandal is loudly chuckling over the cheap notoriety she has gained"—Oh, is she? [Reading.] "But those who minister to the morbid personal vanity that grins beneath the mask of the unknown fair—" Oh! [Dashes the paper to the ground.] Oh!

Enter BALLARD lower door, left, showing in STUBBS, with a brown paper parcel.

Bal. Mr. Stubbs!

[Exit BALLARD.

Stubbs. Sir Thomas Starbuck sent for me to measure all the ladies here. I didn't quite know what to do. If you think I'd better not stay, I've brought your new boots as an excuse— [Showing the parcel.

Lady H. Thank you. Please put them down.

[STUBBS puts parcel on table.

Stubbs. You're in trouble, my lady!

Lady H. Yes, I'm afraid this must all come out, and then—

Stubbs. Yes, my lady?

Lady H. I shall be ruined, or what's far worse—laughed at! Oh! [On the point of breaking down.]

Stubbs. Don't give way, my lady! Remember our walk along the cliffs from Yavercliff to Barrowdown. You nearly gave way once, but you didn't. And when we were swimming to the pier-head, you nearly gave way once, but you didn't! You didn't sink then, and you shan't sink now! if I can help it!

Lady H. Thank you. Hush!

[The lady's song suddenly stops in the middle of a verse, and there is a loud buzz and exclamation in the drawing-room, little murmurs of "Stubbs! Where? Where?"

LADY HERMIONE makes a warning sign to STUBBS. STUBBS snatches up the brown paper parcel he has brought and unties it. It contains a cardboard box with boots inside. SIR THOMAS, rather excited, bursts in from drawing-room, followed by LADY MILDRED, MRS. TREVISS, SIR ARTHUR, and guests. All the guests show great interest in STUBBS, and crowd round to look at him.

SIR T. Where is Mr. Stubbs? Ah! [Seeing STUBBS.] I'm very proud to meet you! [Shaking hands cordially.] I'm Sir Thomas Starbuck!

Stubbs. [Embarrassed.] Delighted to make your acquaintance, Sir Thomas—

SIR T. You got my note? I've been canvassing for you. Got you no end of customers. Ladies, [introducing STUBBS] this is Mr. Roland Stubbs.

Stubbs. [Embarrassed, bowing all round.] Delighted to make the acquaintance of—of—such a bevy of fair ladies—in the way of business, of course.

[Bowing awkwardly.]

LADY BODICOTE sails in from the drawing-room, a large, authoritative, distinguished lady of fifty.

Lady B. I hear the gallant and heroic Mr. Stubbs has arrived! Where is the gallant and heroic Mr. Stubbs? [Looking round.

Stubbs. My name's Stubbs!

Lady B. [Looking at him through eye-glass.] Oh! Somebody introduce Mr. Stubbs to me?

Sir T. Mr. Stubbs!—Lady Bodicote.

[All the guests gather round STUBBS and LADY BODICOTE, except LADY HERMIONE and SIR ARTHUR, who are a little apart. SIR ARTHUR is keenly watching LADY HERMIONE.

Lady B. I must give myself the pleasure of shaking hands with you, Mr. Stubbs—

Stubbs. Oh, my lady— [Holding back.

Lady B. [Insisting.] Oh yes. We still brag about British pluck, but we offer so few examples that it's quite refreshing to find it still lingers in remote villages like Yavercliff. [Shaking hands.] Somebody please give me a chair. You are a leather merchant, Mr. Stubbs?

Stubbs. Yes, my lady. I do a nice little wholesale trade in my patent soft kid, but of course my special feature is a high-class ladies' article!

Sir T. High-class and high-heeled, eh Stubbs?

Lady B. [Seating herself.] Well now, Mr. Stubbs, we want to hear all about these heroic exploits of yours.

Stubbs. Heroic exploits, my lady? I haven't done any! I assure you I haven't!

Lady B. Surely this adventure with the unknown fair was quite in the grand old heroic vein, eh? We must get you the Royal Humane Society's medal.

Stubbs. My lady, I'd rather not have a medal.

Lady B. Oh, but you must have a medal! I'll see about it myself. [STUBBS looks very unhappy.

Sir T. Yes, Stubbs, heroes shouldn't be bashful!

You've earned a national reputation for bravery, and all these ladies are waiting to reward your gallantry by giving you a—

Lady M. Tom!

Sir T. Figuratively speaking—

Lady M. [Appealing to SIR ARTHUR.] Arthur, this is one of Tom's silly, practical jokes. Do please put your foot down.

Sir T. No, no, my dear Milly, it's you ladies who are going to put your foot down, Ha! ha! and give Mr. Stubbs—

Lady M. Arthur, do stop him!

Sir A. I don't quite understand what you want, Tom.

Sir T. We want to reward British pluck, and encourage British industry by giving it a leg up.

[Nodding victoriously to LADY MILDRED.]

Lady B. And we want to hear from Mr. Stubbs all about his heroic adventures.

Sir A. [Glancing at LADY HERMIONE.] Perhaps Mr. Stubbs doesn't wish to tell us? Eh, Mr. Stubbs?

Stubbs. No, Sir Arthur. I came here to measure some ladies [*bringing out tape measures*], and if any lady will oblige me—

Lady B. By-and-by, Mr. Stubbs, by-and-by!

Stubbs. Oh, my lady, business first and pleasure afterwards!

Lady B. Just so. The business of "the unknown fair" first, and then the pleasure of being measured for a pair of boots by her gallant rescuer. You're not quite comfortable. Somebody give Mr. Stubbs a chair.

[A chair is placed for STUBBS and he sits down reluctantly on the edge of it, looking most uncomfortable, fidgetting with his tape measure, and stealing side glances at LADY HERMIONE, which SIR ARTHUR is watching.]

Lady B. [Rolling back on her own seat, and looking at STUBBS through eyeglass.] Now, you're quite comfortable, aren't you?

Stubbs. Yes—quite—

[*Smiling and looking round in an embarrassed way.*]

Lady B. Then go on.

Stubbs. Well, my lady—

Lady B. Yes. We're all waiting—

Sir A. I think it's a little unfair of us to press Mr. Stubbs. Isn't it, Hermione?

Lady H. It's scarcely worth making a fuss about. But if Mr. Stubbs doesn't wish to speak—

Lady B. My dear Hermione, I'm sure you're like all the rest of us. You are simply dying to know all about the unknown fair. Now confess you are!

Lady H. Oh, I'm just as wretched a gossip and busybody as any of my neighbours! I simply glory in raking out any stray bit of scandal! Nothing pleases me so much, except finding out that there are people who delight in it even more than I do! So pray go on, Mr. Stubbs!

Stubbs. Well, my lady—

Lady B. I see one of the papers mentioned that the unknown fair was a lady of title. Of course, if that is the case, we can discover—

Sir A. In any case, don't you think, Lady Bodicote, we ought to respect Mr. Stubbs' evident wish to keep silence? Eh, Hermione?

Lady H. I don't suppose Mr. Stubbs can tell us any more than we have already learned from the newspapers.

Stubbs. Not quite so much, I'm afraid, my lady. [*Looking round uneasily.*] There's really nothing to tell.

Lady B. My dear Mr. Stubbs, if there is nothing to tell, do relieve our curiosity, and tell us. Now, please!

[*Rolling back in her seat and watching STUBBS through an eyeglass.*]

Stubbs. [*Nervous with his tape measure.*] Well, I happened to be down at Yavercliff—

Lady B. Yes—?

Stubbs. And being a fine evening I hired a little rowing-boat—

Lady B. The “Saucy Sally,” or some such pretty idyllic name. Go on. When did the bold bad Mr. Dellow come on the scene?

Stubbs. And as we were rowing back, I heard a cry for help, and I saw a lady hanging on to some moorings, so naturally I rowed up to her, and helped her—not much. She was never in any real danger. [With the slightest glance at LADY HERMIONE.] Well, I escorted her to the pier-head—

Lady B. You escorted her? In the water?

Stubbs. Yes, my lady, and afterwards to the hotel; and she thanked me, and the next morning she got up early and went away before anybody was up. And that’s all. [Rising, and holding out his tape measure.] And now, my lady, oughtn’t we to get on to the measuring, as it’s rather late?

Lady B. Oh, you rescue ladies from drowning up till midnight, Mr. Stubbs! You can surely measure them for boots up till ten. Now, pray sit down. [STUBBS sits reluctantly. SIR ARTHUR is keenly watching.] Please don’t fidget quite so much. The papers say you had a special train to Yavercliff, and gave the boatman of the “Saucy Sally” a five-pound note. Did you?

Stubbs. Well, my lady, I was out for a holiday; and there’s an old saying, “A fool and his money,” and— [rising] if any lady will oblige me—

Lady B. Sit down, Mr. Stubbs! Do sit down, please! You’re really too provoking. We want to know why you were so anxious to risk your life for this unknown fair?

Stubbs. Risk my life, my lady? I’ve won a prize for swimming, and the lady swam splendidly, magnificently—I never met with such a swimmer— [happens to catch SIR ARTHUR’S eye, falters] whoever she was.

Lady B. Whoever she was? Ah, but who was she?

Stubbs. Well—[*a little falteringly*] whoever she was.
[Gets very embarrassed.]

Lady B. Mr. Stubbs, you have one of those open, honest, English faces which are so valuable to the owner, as they give a public guarantee that he couldn't tell an untruth even if he tried. Eh?

Stubbs. Well, I won't go so far as to say I never tell a lie—

Lady B. No? But surely not very often?

Stubbs. No, not very often, my lady. And when I do tell a lie, I always feel very uncomfortable afterwards.

Lady B. Well, that's highly creditable to you. It's the next best thing to telling the truth. Now, Mr. Stubbs, with that open, candid countenance of yours, you won't sit there and tell us that you saved the life of this "unknown fair," and that you don't know who she is? [Looking steadily at STUBBS—STUBBS falters.]

Sir A. Lady Bodicote, I don't think that is quite a fair question.

Stubbs. Oh, Sir Arthur, in the hurry and bustle I quite forgot to ask the lady to give me her name. [Rising.] And now, if any lady will kindly oblige—

Lady B. Certainly. I will be your first victim. [Rising.] Somebody please tell my maid to see that my room is ready, Mr. Stubbs is coming there to measure me for a pair of boots. Come along, Mr. Stubbs.

[STUBBS shows great consternation, which SIR ARTHUR notices.]

Sir A. I'm sure, Lady Bodicote, you won't ask Mr. Stubbs to betray any confidence?

Lady B. No, Sir Arthur. Mr. Stubbs and I are going to have a little quiet talk all to ourselves. This way, Mr. Stubbs.

Lady M. Really, Lady Bodicote, we can't spare Mr. Stubbs to you all alone.

Lady B. My dear Lady Mildred, I have no very rigid notions of decorum, but I cannot be measured for boots in public. Now, Mr. Stubbs.

Lady M. Lady Bodicote, it really isn't fair of you to monopolize Mr. Stubbs.

[*A few gentle murmurs of "No! No! Lady Bodicote! No!"*

Lady M. [Appealing to SIR ARTHUR.] Arthur, please!

Sir A. Lady Bodicote, I'm sure Mr. Stubbs will be pleased to measure any lady for boots if she will call on him at Piccadilly, eh, Mr. Stubbs?

Stubbs. Yes, Sir Arthur, delighted at any time—
25a, Piccadilly.

Sir A. Then I'm sure it would be better to postpone all measuring till then. Miss Pierpoint didn't finish her song. [*Seeing MISS PIERPOINT.*] Oh, Miss Pierpoint, are we trespassing too much? Will you finish your song, or give us another?

Miss P. Oh yes, Sir Arthur, I shall be pleased.

Sir A. Tom, will you take Miss Pierpoint to the piano? [*SIR THOMAS gives MISS PIERPOINT his arm and leads her off into drawing-room.*] Miss Pierpoint is going to sing again. Will you all please go into the drawing-room? Yes, if you please—if you please, Lady Bodicote!

[*They all go off into the drawing-room, leaving STUBBS, LADY HERMIONE, and SIR ARTHUR. LADY BODICOTE goes off last.*

Lady B. [To SIR ARTHUR.] Sir Arthur, you are absolutely devoid of all wholesome feminine curiosity.

Sir A. I must bear your reproaches, Lady Bodicote.

[*Exit LADY BODICOTE.*

Sir A. [At drawing-room door.] I want to have a little talk with you, Mr. Stubbs. Will you please wait here?

Stubbs. Yes, Sir Arthur.

[*A song is heard in the drawing-room and continues during the next scene.*

Sir A. [Going off at door, turns to LADY HERMIONE.] Won't you come to the drawing-room, and help me pass this off?

[Exit into drawing-room. LADY HERMIONE follows him, and as she goes off throws a helpless and comic-piteous look at STUBBS.

Stubbs. Don't be afraid, my lady. I won't give you away, whatever happens.

[Exit LADY HERMIONE. STUBBS follows her to drawing-room door, which she has nearly closed. He stands there and peeps through the door.

Enter BALLARD at left, showing in HARVEY DIX in morning dress.

Bal. If you'll wait here, sir, I'll find Sir Arthur.

[Exit BALLARD into drawing-room, closing door after him. STUBBS has turned round at DIX'S entrance, and the two men have recognized each other, STUBBS showing consternation.

Dix. [Ironically cordial and over-friendly.] Ah, Stubbs! So we meet again, do we?! You gave me the slip on Tuesday morning! But here we are! I've done you well, Stubbs, haven't I? I've sent you sky high! Don't you feel thundering proud of yourself? Eh, my hero?

Stubbs. Why have you come here, Mr. Dix?

Dix. To consult Sir Arthur about this Roman bath at Wroxeter.

Stubbs. Oh, yes.

Dix. And to find out whether Lady Hermione Candlish is our "unknown fair!"

Stubbs. Why, what makes you think——?

Dix. When I couldn't get at you in Piccadilly I started a few inquiries by the usual means, and picked up a thing or two. I found out that you always came down here for week-ends. I followed you down today and made a few more inquiries at the Angel, and

the result is that I fancy, Stubbs, I fancy, I'm on the track of the unknown fair. Eh, Stubbs?

Stubbs. You'd better see for yourself.

Dix. That's what I mean to do.

Enter BALLARD from drawing-room.

Bal. Sir Arthur will see you in a few minutes, sir.

Dix. Thank you. [Exit BALLARD, left. And you lay your life, Mr. Stubbs, I shan't cry off till I have found our unknown fair.

LADY HERMIONE enters quietly from drawing-room, and comes face to face with DIX. She gives a little start of surprise. STUBBS rises. LADY HERMIONE stands for a moment.

I beg pardon. Lady Hermione Candlish, I believe?

Lady H. Yes.

Dix. I'm Mr. Harvey Dix, of "The Englishman." I think we've met—

Lady H. [Just managing to keep her self-possession.] I don't think so. May I ask your business?

Dix. I'm waiting to see Sir Arthur about this new Roman bath.

Lady H. I'm afraid he's engaged just now, but I'll see. [Exit into drawing-room.]

Dix. [Snatching up his hat, and going off, left.] That's all right!

Stubbs. [Stopping him.] Where are you going?

Dix. To the telegraph office. They're keeping it open for me.

Stubbs. No! I say, this Yavercliff mystery has been a splendid advertisement for me. I never had three such days' business!

Dix. Glad to hear it. Can't wait. [Going off.]

Stubbs. You must. Can't we keep it up? Don't you see? Don't let it get out who the unknown fair really is, and I'll write you a cheque, eh?

Dix. Much obliged. Can't do it.

Stubbs. Yes! Any amount! How much?

Dix. Can't do it!

Stubbs. Why not?

Dix. It might be known, and it's dead against my principles to get found out. It would kill my reputation.

Stubbs. Your reputation?! What about her reputation?

Dix. If she values her reputation, she shouldn't go escapading at night aboard Mr. Dellow's yacht. [Going.

Stubbs. No, don't go. Then you really mean to hunt her down and ruin her?

Dix. Not at all. I've no spite against Lady Hermione, but I've got the interests of my paper and the public to serve.

Stubbs. But how can it be to the interest of your paper and the public to drag a lady through the dirt? You won't do it, Mr. Dix?

Dix. Sorry, Stubbs, I must. The fact is, if I bring the Yavercliff mystery off all right, it will give me a big lift up with my editor, and then—well—I'll tell you in confidence—there's a rather nice girl who has promised to become Mrs. Dix—so you see, Stubbs, under the circumstances, I must bring it off. I really must! Good night. [Going.

Stubbs. No. You ask *her* whether she'll like to think that you've made her happy by bringing a lady into disgrace and misery, and if she's really a nice girl, she'll tell you to let the unknown fair remain unknown. You will, eh? You will?

Dix. Oh, shut up! I'm not going to be diddled out of a good thing by your blarney.

Stubbs. Then you're going to be cowardly enough to ruin Lady Hermione?

Dix. [Arrested by something in STUBBS' tone.] Stubbs, what the deuce is Lady Hermione to you?

Stubbs. I'm her bootmaker. She's one of my best customers.

Dix. Yes. And what more? Why should you go taking special trains and risking your life, and offering cheques to any amount, to save her reputation? There's something behind it. Look here, you tell me the real down-right truth, and I won't promise I won't let her off. What's Lady Hermione to you?

Stubbs. She's my ideal!

Dix. Ideal? What do you mean?

Stubbs. I can't tell you if you don't know. I've loved her since I was a shopboy. I shall go on loving her while there's a breath of life in me. She doesn't think anything of me, you know—not in that way.

Dix. [Gazes at him in wonderment.] Good Heavens! Well, of all—Well, I—Well! What infernal rummy folks and things there are in the world! Your ideal! I don't see anything extraordinary in Lady Hermione.

Stubbs. I can't help your being born blind, can I?

Dix. Your ideal!

Stubbs. Yes. I daresay you think I'm an idiot to have an ideal! But I'm not! I'm the most sensible man that ever lived! It's the damned common-sense people that are the fools. I say, you won't really ruin Lady Hermione? You daren't go back to the girl who loves you and tell her you've done it!

Dix. Hang it all, Stubbs, this isn't fair! And next week I shall only think what a fool I've been——!

Stubbs. No, you won't! You'll pat yourself on the back all your life for having been a thorough good chap and saved a lady from disgrace. You ask your girl else!

LADY HERMIONE, *enters from drawing-room.* STUBBS goes up to her.

It's all right, your ladyship. Mr. Dix says his young lady wouldn't like him to build their future happiness on the downfall of a lady who has never injured him. So he's going to kill off his unknown fair to-night.

Lady H. [To DIX.] Is that so? How good of you.
[Turning to DIX.] I'm deeply grateful.

Dix. [Nonplussed.] Don't mention it, my lady.

Lady H. You're sure you can kill her?

Dix. Oh, yes—she'll soon die a natural death if I don't keep her alive by artificial stimulation.

Lady H. I shall never forget your generosity and I'm sure you'll never regret it.

[Offering hand; DIX takes it.

Dix. [Shaking hands.] I'm sure I shan't. [After a moment's pause.] I'd better not wait to see Sir Arthur. Will you please tell him that I'll write him about the Roman bath?

Lady H. Yes. I'm sure he'll be pleased to give you all particulars.

Dix. May I ask which is my nearest way out?

Lady H. You can go through the veranda. The gate's on the left there.

Dix. Good night, your ladyship.

Lady H. [Offering hand.] You will keep silent? I may rely on you?

Dix. You may, my lady. You've heard the last of the unknown fair. [Exit DIX at veranda.

Lady H. [With a deep sigh of relief.] What a relief! Sir Arthur is coming to question you. If we can only get rid of his suspicions. You're sure of yourself?

Stubbs. Yes, my lady. But, my lady—you won't mind my speaking—why don't you tell Sir Arthur all?

Lady H. Oh, I couldn't!

Stubbs. Yes, you could, my lady. I'm sure it will be best. He'll always suspect you if you don't. Do tell him, my lady. You'll feel so much happier.

Lady H. You think so? I'll try. [Goes to drawing-room door.] He's coming here—

Stubbs. Tell him, my lady. Do tell him!

[Creeps off at veranda.

SIR ARTHUR enters from drawing-room.

Sir A. Where's the newspaper man? And where's Stubbs?

[*Going to ring bell.*]

Lady H. Arthur, I've something to tell you—

Sir A. Well?

Lady H. I've been a very weak, silly woman.

Sir A. Then it was you?!

Lady H. Yes. [*He bristles with anger.*] It's no use your being angry with me. I've already lectured myself, rowed myself, and pointed out to myself all the fatal consequences that might have happened—and didn't, and won't. I've had three awful days' shivering with fright, and I've repented in sackcloth and ashes. So that's all over!

Sir A. All over?! There's this newspaper scandal ready to burst out!

Lady H. No. I've just seen the man. We shall hear no more of the unknown fair.

Sir A. You've bribed him, I suppose?

Lady H. No. He's a gentleman, and he's promised not to hit a woman when she's down. Will you?

Sir A. But you're not down. You're up and defiant. You've wronged me, and you try to pass it off with a laugh.

Lady H. I'm not defiant. I'm very sorry. And I've not wronged you!

Sir A. You've not wronged me?

Lady H. No.

Sir A. How do I know that? You promised me not to go to that man. You went! I asked you if you were this unknown fair, and you indignantly denied it. You put on a mask. How do I know that you are not putting on a mask now?

Lady H. Arthur is sleeping upstairs. Take me up to him if you wish, and ask me over his cot. Will you

come? Arthur, you believe me? I shall only tell you this once. [*Very slowly and emphatically.*] I have not wronged you. Do you believe me?

Sir A. Yes. But why did you go? The man must have some attraction for you—

Lady H. Not a fraction, I assure you. I despised him then as I despise him now.

Sir A. But why did you go? You love your child, I think you love me a little?

Lady H. I do. Never more than now.

Sir A. Then why risk your reputation, your home, your friends, everything, for a silly, empty flirtation with a man you care nothing about?

Lady H. Oh, my dear Arthur, don't ask me! Curiosity, pique, defiance, love of adventure, love of admiration, love of the unknown, vanity, vanity, vanity. Why, what are we women? Nothing but a bundle of inconsistencies tied to a big nerve-centre! I do believe that some of us are almost as weak, and small, and vain, and curious as men!

Sir A. As men!?

Lady H. As the average man. I don't mean you. You're really far above the average! Well, let me look up to you, then. Be magnanimous and forgive me for being a woman. I'm sorry, very sorry! I've had my lesson! It shan't happen again! Will you forgive me?

Sir A. Yes.

[*Kisses her.*

Lady H. Hadn't we better go to them? [*Pointing to drawing-room.*] They said something about a dance.

Sir A. Hermione, promise me one thing—

Lady H. [*Throwing her arms round him.*] Oh, I'll promise you everything!

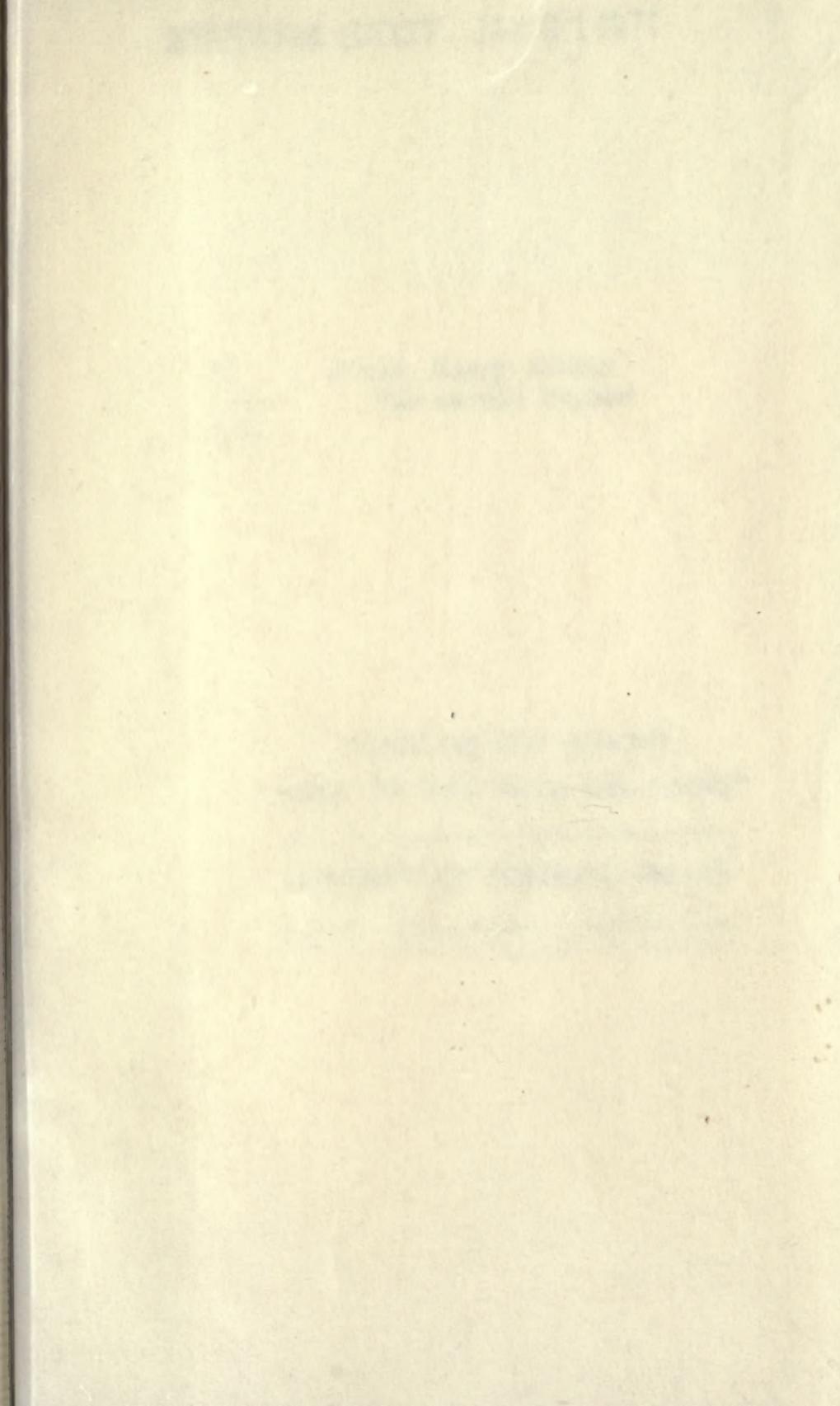
[*They go into the drawing-room.* STUBBS appears at veranda, looks in, enters, listens, creeps up to drawing-room door, peeps in. *The dance music swells.* He closes

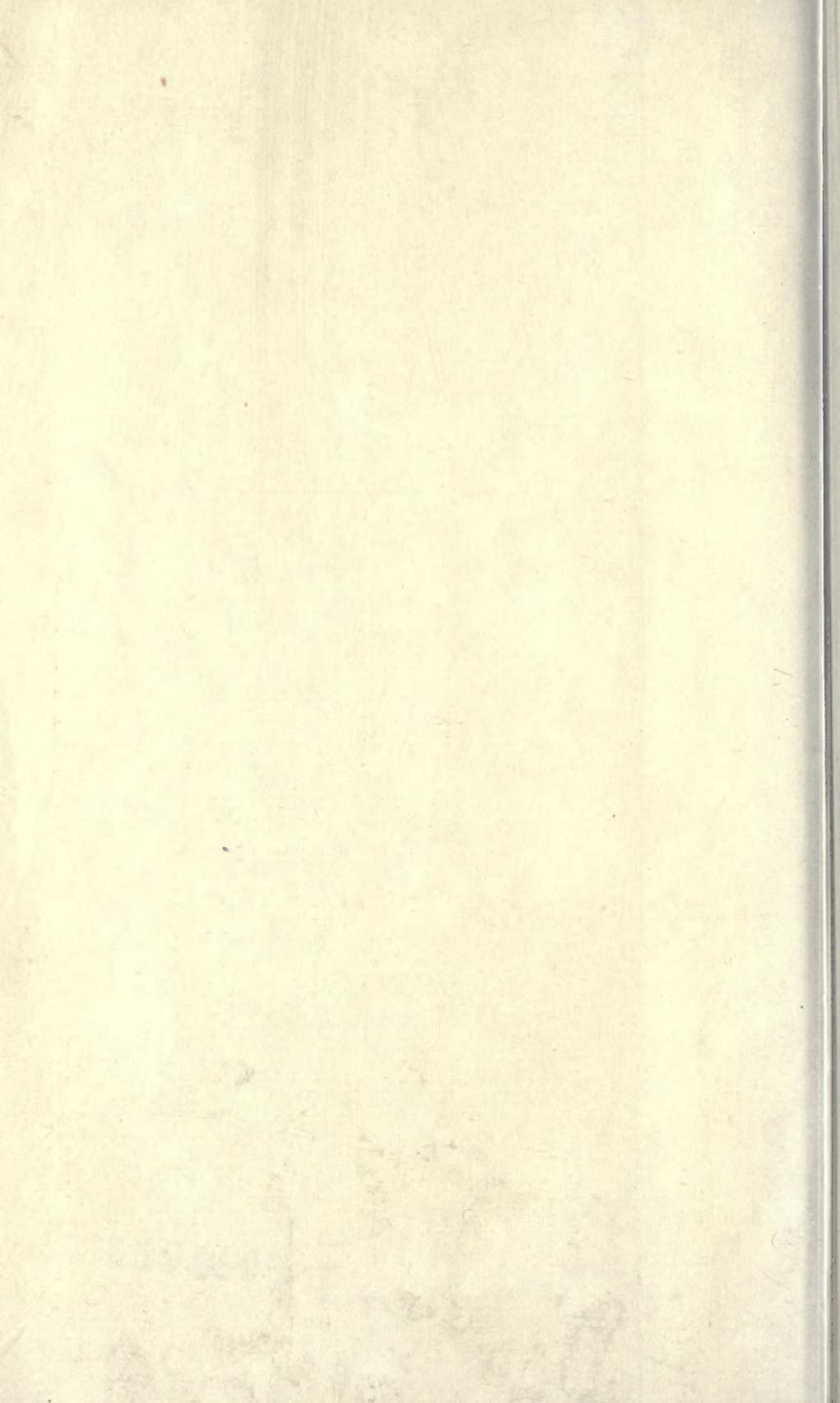
door, comes up to the table where he has left the boot package, fastens it, puts it under his arm, goes off slowly and sadly at veranda, and exit.

CURTAIN.

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Jones, Henry Arthur
The heroic Stubbs

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